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# A Theological, Sociological, and Educational Rationale for the Curriculum : "Luther's Explanation to the Decalogue, as Explored Through Film : a Curriculum for Young Adults" ; Luther's Explanation to the Decalogue as Explored Through Film : a Curriculum for Young Adults

Karen A. Wilson

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A Theological, Sociological, and Educational Rationale

For the Curriculum:

“Luther’s Explanation to the Decalogue,

As Explored through Film:

A Curriculum for Young Adults”

By

Karen A. Wilson

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Presented to Professor Roland Martinson

Luther Seminary

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Guided Reading in Pastoral Care

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b><i>BC</i></b>	<i>Book of Concord</i> . Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis, 2000.
<b><i>FC</i></b>	<i>Formula of Concord</i>
<b><i>LC</i></b>	<i>Large Catechism</i>
<b><i>LW-CD</i></b>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , English Edition, CD-Rom.
<b><i>NRSV</i></b>	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i> . Source of all biblical quotations, unless indicated.
<b><i>SC</i></b>	<i>Small Catechism</i>

A Theological, Sociological, and Educational Rationale

For the Curriculum:

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**Introduction**

*“[These] are the [effects of words] sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” Mark 4:20*

*“If [the soul] has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing, since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory and of every incalculable blessing.” Martin Luther, “Freedom of a Christian”<sup>1</sup>*

Many young adults today are disenchanted with Christianity yet hunger for a spiritual connection.<sup>2</sup> Others have no clue who the God of Scriptures is.<sup>3</sup> Their religious

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<sup>1</sup>*The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in *LW-CD* 31:345.

<sup>2</sup> David W. Anderson, Paul G. Hill, and Roland D. Martinson, *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Younger Men*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 8.

exposure in their formative years likely was at the whim of their parents or consisted of a variety of experiences and/or interpretations. The new adults hold God-views mirroring those of the society that raised them, running the gamut from unconcerned enabler to intolerant dictator; from dead and irrelevant to alive and exacting, from the only way of truth and life to one of many equal options from the spiritual and theological smorgasbord.<sup>4</sup>

Young adults live in a society sustained by consumerism for self and no longer by production for others.<sup>5</sup> Self-esteem, self-defined identities, and compulsive acquisitions, paradoxically requiring validation by others, are treasures demanding self-protection,<sup>6</sup> even for those professing trust in God. Media and religious leaders of every variety promulgate perfection of body, mind, spirit, environment, and society as intrinsically attainable through changed human actions and reliance on human rationality and ingenuity. Society no longer teaches that laws provide all people safety and benefit by defining common boundaries to self-serving actions; rather, secular and religious leaders now teach that laws only have worth if they support one's cause, validate one's self, or deliver one's desires. If the law appears not to favor you, then deem it invalid and inconsequential.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>4</sup> Carl G. Eeman, *Generations of Faith: a congregational atlas*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2002), 74.

<sup>5</sup> James E. Côte, *Arrested Adulthood, The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 196.

Consequently, when the ultimate communal bliss continues to elude humanity, a perpetual state of finger pointing and power struggle ensues as the needs for validation of individual wants clash for dominance. The perceived sins perpetuated by others against one's self, or against one's cause, demand retribution, while the same sins committed by self against others are justified as a necessary consequence of working for one's view of the greatest good. Any concept that every human of every place and time can only be self-serving, can only push their needs before others and so must continually recognize and repent of their own sins while simultaneously forgiving others' failures, is conveniently ignored as a negative, externally imposed baggage to be discarded along life's pursuit of perfection.

And so today's young adults turn their back against the apparent hypocrisy of God's followers and search throughout society for what they cannot find: a community based on authenticity, mutuality and equality.<sup>7</sup> They seek, as do all humans, affirmation and acknowledgement of themselves, their gifts, and their contributions from people genuine about who they themselves are, and who treat each other with equality. Yet, how can any group of humans addicted to self-promotion create such a community? Can people each seeking validation of self and self-held ideals, but not seeing or validating the damage their own sin causes, create anything other than the community from Golding's book, *Lord of the Flies*,<sup>8</sup> wherein isolated youth ultimately destroy each other through the struggle for domination?

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<sup>7</sup> Anderson, *Coming of Age*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, (Great Britain: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1954). A group of youths becomes stranded on an island, isolated from all influences external to themselves. They lose their gloss of applied civilization, exposing their sin-filled cores promulgating of self, first and only.

How does one communicate an alternate vision of community wherein each person names and claims *their own* addiction to sin and self; laws are understood as basically good, creating safe boundaries for interaction, and all are held accountable to them; every person admits and repents for their own selfish actions to others and then – here is the key –forgives others for being human and placing themselves over the community; and finally, every member of the community repays this forgiveness by working to benefit the others and not themselves?

How does one communicate that human sin is reality, and human perfection in thought, word, deed, body, environment, society is fool's gold – a worthless glitter promulgating religious and secular systems attempting to enable a mythical, inner good that will usher in a perfected human condition, but that ultimately pulls people further into sin?

How does one communicate that the authentic, mutual and equal community all humans seek is what God of Scripture calls us to, but that humans will eternally fail to attain on their own as their own sin will always distort their vision to serve self first?

How does one communicate that, through overwhelming love for humanity, God's actions nearly 2,000 years ago provided the only solution to our quest for justice, mercy, equality, acceptance, and love?

I assert Martin Luther's theology provides the most balanced answer to these questions by proclaiming, as categorical from Scripture, God, Sin, and God's Gospel of forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ alone. Luther's treatment of sin as the systemic, lifetime state of humanity is absent from other theologies, including those professed by many Lutherans, yet it paradoxically enables a paradigm shift in community

wherein God's gift of faith binds human ambition and reason and unleashes God's new creation through forgiveness. The attached curriculum attempts such a communication by beginning at Luther's beginning: with his catechisms and the Decalogue.

Luther contended that good fruit only comes from a good plant. A good plant only comes from a good seed, planted in good soil that is well tilled, well weeded, and well amended. To till soil hardened by decades of neglect, weed choked and rocky by sin and self-delusion, a form of hoe must break through its dried crust. God's Word verbally proclaimed in the particular is the hoe with which God breaks through our self-made crusts, to till our soil and plant the good seed of God's gospel. The curriculum voice used is that of particular proclamation to the individual, with the prayer that God may utilize its written words to till the learner for the verbal preacher God calls into their lives.

### **Theologically, Why Focus on Negativity to Plant a Seed For Good Fruit?**

To be authentic with others one needs an authentic understanding of oneself. Scripture teaches that humans cannot allow God even a modicum of uncontested control over their lives, and then they self-deem this thought process beneficial and necessary. In response to people ignoring God, and God's rules given to keep people safe and promote life, God warns and finally punishes through exile where they learn what life away from God is truly like. God then works to heal the relationship people broke. For example:

- Adam and Eve rebelled over a single tree, the only part of creation left to God's control and not theirs. They rationalized away trust in God by declaring God was keeping something from them, and they took what God warned was not theirs. To



their surprise their prize created eyes wide open to the nakedness of their condition, a fear of God's voice, a God wounded by their abandonment,<sup>9</sup> and the punishment of a struggle-filled life away from God's presence. As they left Eden, however, God protected them from the elements with skins, and then set about to restore the relationship they broke.

- Abraham and Sarah, while attempting to stay focused on God's promised blessings of land and family, continually became impatient waiting on God's time and repeatedly employed their own wisdom to circumvent obstacles. Their final prize, after God's multiple interventions, talks with Abraham, and a child born to a very old woman: two nations of children that today still fight from the pain of Abraham's, Sarah's, and her maid, Hagar's, inability to trust God. God, on the other hand, sustained the lives of both families as they separated and flourished, ultimately providing eternal life to humanity through these self-serving spouses.
- The Israelites, liberated from Egypt after crying to God for rescue, later decried God's methods of providing for them in the wilderness and demanded to return to their good old days as slaves. Their two-pronged prize attested to by history: first, a land rich in milk, honey and neighbors luring Israel throughout history to trust

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<sup>9</sup> God wounded by humanity, emotionally and physically, is a theme reiterated through Scripture. God is the heartbroken deity that destroyed humanity while saving Noah. God is the pained father with recalcitrant children in Amos. God is the wounded and abandoned husband of a harlot in Hosea. Jesus is God weeping for Jerusalem wishing to gather her children as a brood. Jesus as human was nailed to the cross for our sins. Could the story of humanity, cast as Adam, Eve, Cain, and Able, also contain an implicitly wounded God? Explicitly, these stories are usually taught as God pronouncing judgment in response to human action. Can a case be made that God was in truth wounded by human rationalization that dismissed God, continually justified its actions, and looked for others to blame, but never repented and asked for forgiveness from God or each other, and never desired a restoration of their relationship of trust? Could it be that their banishment was a time-out to learn that life outside of God's presence is tantamount to hell, as they had to fight each other for validation?

military might, secularism and consumerism over God, and second, a God, continually wounded by Israel's abandonment, who allows sin's intrinsic catastrophes to evict Israel from the land, and then restores a remnant back to the land for yet another go at relationship.

From Jonah to Judas, from Israel to Peter, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Biblical stories teach trust in human rationale twisted by sin creates death and separation, painfully wounding God in the process. Complete trust in God, on the other hand, brings life and reconciliation through God resurrecting a new creature from the ashes of human mistrust.

Luther's theology defined reliance on self and not God as Original Sin, systemic and permanent to humanity; it was not a developmental stage humanity worked its way out of either by its own volition or with God's help.<sup>10</sup> Luther also learned from Scripture that while sin was systemic, knowledge of its existence was not. Humanity only comprehended its sin when God defined and proclaimed their thoughts and actions as such.<sup>11</sup> Paul writes in Romans 7:7b: "Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."" Jesus also stated that humans were quite adept at seeing sin in others but not in themselves, and the sins they were ignoring far exceeded those they perceived in

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<sup>10</sup> *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), in *LW-CD* 33:69. "...in relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice, but is a captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

others (Luke 6:42). Luther reiterated that sin blinded humans to its own existence,<sup>12</sup> and ruled over humanity until God worked in them.<sup>13</sup>

Scripture also revealed to Luther that sin was not the final answer: God's passion for humanity was taken to its extreme end, resulting in Christ's death on the cross, destroying sin's power and its judgment of death to each person. God then promised an eternal, reconciled life for everyone who trusted that Christ's actions on the cross were for him or her, personally.<sup>14</sup> Yet, how did one come to such a faith? How could people mired in sin choose to put God first before themselves?

Luther discovered God's ultimate illogical paradox: humans were incapable of believing in God; God gifted humans their faith. God not only did all God deemed necessary to reconcile humanity back to God, God also gifted humans trust in God's promise that this reconciliation was for them, individually, in the particular:<sup>15</sup> first through God's Word proclaimed in baptism, which killed each person's sinful self (their Old Adam/Eve) and resurrected a new creation within the individual, and then continued each time the person heard God's Word proclaimed in sermon, song, Scripture readings, and during Holy Communion's Words of Institution. In contrast to God's words spoken through the Old Testament prophets to the nation as a whole, the verbal proclamation of God's Word of reconciliation, renewal and resurrection through Christ was in the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>14</sup> *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in *LW-CD* 31:348

<sup>15</sup> *Preface to Latin Writings* (1545), in *LW-CD* 34:337.

particular to individuals, proclaimed *for you*, melded into physical elements for each person to grasp onto by which God restored their relationship.

Proclaiming humans bonded to sin until death, incapable of believing in God or affecting their own salvation, was controversial to religious leaders from the start. Of course, their jobs relied on convincing the populous to purchase their salvation by doing good works and buying “salvation credits”, or indulgences, which funded papal building projects and priestly works such as saying mass. Many in the church would have been out of a job without this cash-cow industry. Even some of Luther’s friends sought to tone Luther down and retain some human ability to rise above sin through good works.<sup>16</sup> Within a short time, many professing Lutheran theology had reverted to preaching humans could accomplish all good, with or without God.

But while only Luther’s theology proclaimed humans as sinful for life, thus earning only death and not salvation on their own, most Western religions since the Reformation did retain the belief that some form of God existed who desired relationship, and provided the means for the relationship. In addition, most Christian denominations stressed that human dismissal of God carried a cost. As America grew from its original colonies the reliance on God provided a societal moral compass, however bent by human intervention, which continually shaped its civil society until the mid twentieth century when self-declared “enlightened” Westerners declared God legally dead and irrelevant. Human reasoning and rationality finally eclipsed reliance on God as the basis for making moral decisions.

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<sup>16</sup> *FC Ed. Intro.*, in *BC*, 482.

Today Western culture is reminiscent of pre-exilic Israel, depending on human ability and military might over trust in the Divine, and consumerism and consumption benefiting the self over production and care for the community. The culture is raising decades of children – who are now entering adulthood – with little or no historical or theological understanding that humans always place individual wants over the needs of the local and global community, and that their narcissism carries a heavy price.<sup>17</sup>

### **How Does Humanity, Mired in Sin, Do Anything Good?**

In 1530, Luther wrote a preface to his Large Catechism: “This much is certain: those who know the Ten Commandments perfectly know the entire Scriptures and in all affairs and circumstances are able to counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. They are qualified to be a judge over all doctrines, walks of life, spirits, legal matters, and everything else in the world.”<sup>18</sup>

The Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, summarizes God’s Law given to all people. It communicates God’s defined framework for human relationship with God and with other humans. It is the means by which God enacts justice and mercy and provides safety through boundaries of human action, defining the many ways humans destroy each other when they trust and serve only themselves. By its inverse, it teaches how life is upheld and sustained. The tenets of the Decalogue relating to human interaction undergird human law across cultures and across time: honor your elders and authority

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<sup>17</sup> Côte, *Arrested Adulthood*, 195-198.

<sup>18</sup> *LC* Pref. 17 (1530), in *BC*, 382.

and keep your hands off other people's possessions (though history teaches humanity has always managed to rationalize itself out of following even its own rules).

Luther's preface, however, recognized that only understanding what not to do to other people was incomplete. Knowledge of the entire Decalogue was required to provide a person with the tools to enact and administer a just society, as relationships with humanity directly correlated with who one's god was. Luther understood all humans had a god, what they placed their trust and belief in with their whole heart.<sup>19</sup> Through sin, humanity's default god was itself,<sup>20</sup> often hidden behind other objects such as wealth, possessions, or even behind altruistic works. Sin bound humanity to only put itself first before God, just as it bound each person to put the wants of self before the needs of others. Throughout his Large Catechism, Luther related the commandments back to the first, as in his explanation to the fifth commandment: Do Not Murder. "Once again we have God's Word by which...[he] always wants to remind us to recall the First Commandment, that he is our God; that is, that he wishes to help, comfort, and protect us, so that he may restrain our desire for revenge."<sup>21</sup>

In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther reminds us God is who uses the law to accomplish God's will for a just and merciful world, not humans.<sup>22</sup> Humans are mired in sin, but God works good through the same people who are, by default, incapable of doing good. To understand God's law, therefore, is to understand how God is working good

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<sup>19</sup> LC 1, 1:2, in BC, 386.

<sup>20</sup> *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), in LW-CD 33:69.

<sup>21</sup> LC 1, 5:195, in BC, 413.

<sup>22</sup> *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), in LW-CD 33:148.

within the world, through believers and through unbelievers, even without ones knowledge or consent, providing safety, justice, and mercy to all people.

In *Freedom of a Christian*, Luther shows how studying the law in depth exposes the second way God uses God's Law: by understanding God's first use of the law we recognize we are completely incapable of perfectly doing the same.<sup>23</sup> We may try to put God first, we may try to not steal, we may try to not covet, we may try not to destroy each other's reputations, and so on, but ultimately we fail. The law becomes God's mirror exposing our sinfulness, showing we always promote ourselves even when we have good intentions and try to work for the good of all.

A case in point on a global scale is how a scientific hypothesis from the 1970's, proposing global warming resulted from increased CO<sub>2</sub> levels rather than the opposite, has resulted in a new religion elevating the needs of the planet over the needs of humans. An entire industry now exists making its wealth researching, promoting and distributing a set of solutions designed to implement this tenet. Time and page length preclude an in-depth analysis of this issue, including the valid scholarship and myths promulgated by both sides. What is noteworthy, however, is that the industry generates its own synergy, feeding on the damage people cause each other and the environment while completely dismissing the damage caused by its own solutions. When jobs and funding are at stake, underlying claims must remain unshaken; fear for one's financial security weaves a bias, whether inadvertent or overt, to skew statements, actions, and research results in the direction the funding source expects. In addition, when developed civilizations attempt to mitigate their damage by curtailing global industrial development and dictating the forms

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<sup>23</sup> *Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in *LW-CD*, 31:348

of global energy development, that in turn curtails the ability of people in undeveloped countries to reach even the lowest living standards of health and subsistence enjoyed by people in developed nations.

Human solutions ultimately will serve the self not the other, and knowledge of God's law uncovers God's inconvenient truth: sin brings with it an intrinsic consequence of death – to others and to ourselves. Our sinful human nature must and will cease to exist because of our sin, and we can do anything to prevent this judgment. Our terror at our impending death reducing us to nothing causes us to join the psalmist and cry out for mercy and help.<sup>24</sup> The question is: to whom are we calling? Who is our God and from where do we expect our protection or solution to come?

For people raised without a concept of sin or a relevant God, who strive through their own efforts to establish justice and mercy within the world, the Decalogue, then, is the place to begin to find answers. Studying the commandments enables recognition that sin – our daily failure to live the healthy, balanced community God intends for us when we trust God first and live for each other – is the common bond joining all humans, causing them to cry for mercy. The commandments then bring us to the Gospel: God's solution of life through death, recreating life out of chaos by killing sinful selves and creating new hearts through forgiveness. Through God's gift of faith we hear God's words of forgiveness for ourselves and we ask forgiveness from others, and then we proclaim both God's forgiveness and our own forgiveness back.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



### **Sociologically, Who are the Incoming Adults and Who Raised Them?**

In order to develop curriculum, including one seeking to provide an entrance to the Gospel, one must understand the audience: who they are, what they are striving for, and developmentally what they can understand and how do they theoretically make meaning of their surroundings. Sociological and developmental theories and empirical studies provide glimpses into who today's incoming adults are.

First, however, it must be noted that humanity defies categorization. How a person develops is not only the result of historical patterns, but also how one individually processes his or her unique environmental influences; therefore, all theoretical and empirical understandings of an age group can only be generalizations.

#### **The Audience through Theoretical Lenses: Eeman, Côte and Parks**

The curriculum targets young adults ages 18 to 30, with the current group being born between 1976 and 1988. This group is now out of mandatory adult supervision (school) and is defining their identity through vocation exploration and communal relationships. As with all generations, their lives have been shaped by the interaction with, and supervision by, adults, or the lack thereof, and in response to the adult reaction to society and crisis.

Carl Eeman's *Generations of Faith*<sup>25</sup>, augmenting William Strauss and Neil Howe's sociological descriptions of American generations with religious implications, begins his book with the circularity of history: "As a generation matures through youth

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<sup>25</sup> Eeman, *Generations of Faith*, 49-70.

and into adulthood, it begins to modify or even resist some of the [societal] forces at work. As Strauss and Howe say, “History shapes generations,” but every generation reacts differently to history. As a generation moves into the second half of life, it now does the shaping of history, particularly in its actions toward younger generations.” James Côte, in *Arrested Adulthood*, asserts today’s incoming adults are dealing with the aftermath of the Boomer generation, born between World War II and 1960.<sup>26</sup> Understanding the upcoming adults, therefore, must be grounded in understanding the preceding generations of adults and the society they created.

## Boomers

The primary shapers of today’s society are Boomers, in their second half of life and defining current leadership patterns. The Boomer generation, born between 1942 and 1960, follows the empirical Strauss & Howe generational pattern of post-war Idealists.<sup>27</sup> Idealist generations are born into relative post-war peace and prosperity led by a Civic generation (e.g. GIs, born 1901 – 1924) and the upcoming Adaptive generation (e.g. Silents, born 1925 – 1942), a time when the nation refocuses its productive energies on making peace not war.<sup>28</sup> Historically, Idealists are born into eras of strong gender-defined

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<sup>26</sup> Côte, *Arrested Adulthood*, 195-202.

<sup>27</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future from 1584 to 2069*, in Carl G. Eeman, *Generations of Faith: a congregational atlas*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2002). Strauss and Howe present evidence of four, 88-year generational cycles in American history: Adaptive, Idealist, Reactive/Nomad, and Civic, with each generation consisting of four 22-year cycles: youth, early adult, mid adult and elderhood. Appendix A presents the timeline grid of these generations.

<sup>28</sup> Eeman, *Generations of Faith*, 29.

roles. Adult men are rebuilding society. Soldiers of all ages are returning from war to start businesses and families, transferring their discipline forged by the military to work in hierarchically structured institutions that command and receive respect. Women are at home raising bumper crops of children with the financial security to provide ample goods, emotional attention, and lives filled with unconditional love. Eeman writes,

“In religious terms, [Idealist] children from early on experience a life of grace; forgiveness is frequent. The downside of all this acceptance and forgiveness to the point of indulgence is cheap grace. Children conclude – with little evidence to the contrary – that sins against God or other human beings have no *real* consequences... This gender division between omnipresent, hardworking, ever-caring mother and rule-making, discipline-wielding and goods-providing father works an unusual effect on their children’s view of God. Children see unconditional love, grace, acceptance, and support presented in a female package, while absence, judgment, punishment, and the power to produce, are tied to males. Transferred to images and expectation of God, Idealist generations tend to link pleasurable and positive traits of God to the feminine. The more difficult, distant, and painful attributes of God are linked to the masculine.”<sup>29</sup>

Churches during Idealist childhoods re-solidify as highly structured, hierarchical institutions run primarily by men and which mimic their surrounding societies. Religious education is left-brained and rationalistic. “...[Each] denomination imparts a certain body of knowledge about the path to salvation. Adults teach traditional catechetical formulas and celebrate memorized, traditional responses from youth. (Lutheran leaders ask, “What

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 51.

does this mean?” and Lutheran confirmands are to reply, “We are to fear and love God so that...”<sup>30</sup> It is this traditionalism, Eeman writes, that sets up the Idealist pattern for rebellion and development of religious sects.<sup>31</sup> Idealist children, reared by mothers to value introspection and individualism and to “seek inner meaning and ever-richer private experiences,” view left-brained faith activity as hollow. They create religious peer groups to duplicate maternal love, acceptance and indulgence which run counter to their male image of God as masculine, powerful and angry. For Boomers, the standard rebellion of youths against their fathers became a rebellion against the God of Scriptures, primarily of the Old Testament.<sup>32</sup>

Historically, as Idealist youth move into adulthood these rebellions play out in massive demonstrations and breaks with tradition, igniting spiritual renewals and explorations, revivals and awakenings.<sup>33</sup> Eeman presents five themes common to America’s four, historical Idealist generations: (1) seeking spiritual experiences and loudly insisting on freedom to pursue them; (2) the agitation for women’s rights and

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, 2<sup>nd</sup> paperback ed, *The Churching of America 1776 – 2005, Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, (Piscataway, MN: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 43-46. A sect is a religious body out of sync with society around it. As the two merge, known as secularization, the sect becomes a church. Historically, the more a denomination is secularized the more it declines, while the more a sect is counter-culture, the greater its membership increases.

<sup>32</sup> Eeman, *Generations of Faith*, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 53. The historical evidence includes: religious colonies established by the Puritan generation (born 1584 – 1614) against highly-liturgical fathers from the King James generation; the Great Awakenings of the Awakener (born 1700 – 1723) and the Transcendental (born 1792 – 1821) generations, advocating the new inner spiritual experience over the old theological religion; the Missionary generation (born 1860 – 1882) birthing the Holiness movement, racially and gender integrated services and pulpits, communes and apocalyptic messages. Most currently, the Boomer generation (born 1944-1960) explored alternative realities, drugs, sex, lifestyles, and Eastern religions, “looking for religious or spiritual underpinnings for their condemnation of a soulless, immoral society.”

equality; (3) arguments between Idealists themselves and also with other generations; (4) harsh critique of existing social order with the call for, and attempted establishment of, perfected human communities; and (5) a call to drop things scientific, planned, artificial, modern in deference to that which is intuitive, spontaneous, natural and folk-primitive.<sup>34</sup> When Idealists move from early adulthood into midlife adulthood and assume the mantle of leadership, however, they do so with a decisive pendulum swing, reinventing a highly structured society supporting their morals and ideals.

Boomers followed historical tradition. Entering adulthood in the 1960's and 70's, they preferred alternative, back-to-nature lifestyles to the formula-based suburban lifestyles of the 50's to 60's. Procreation and families were delayed or abandoned, and even became portrayed as "evil and satanic" by the media.<sup>35</sup> On the job, entry-level work was unfulfilling for spiritual quests thriving on immediate self-fulfillment, breeding disinterest and disrespect: work for the paycheck and find life's meaning elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

As Boomers moved into middle age in the 70's and 80's, however, they became raptly attentive to education, rules, and work. Babies became precious, planned and desired, with every movement and life stage analyzed. As their children aged Boomers looked to school uniforms to hopefully improve student focus on studies and improve test scores, which they used to rate schools. They sought public funding of private education

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 73. Hollywood, run primarily by the Silent generations, found a solid market in Boomers for movies promoting anti-children, anti-family, and anti-social rule expressions. *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Easy Rider* (1969), *Alice's Restaurant* (1969), *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (1969), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Soylent Green* (1973), *The Omen* (1976), and *Logan's Run* (1976), are a few examples.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 55.

through school vouchers, hoping to use public tax dollars to fund their perception of superior education – one that stressed standards and hard work. They embraced their own work with a vengeance, laboring 24/7 on visionary ideas which society lavishly rewarded when successful. This created a gambler's mentality to discard failed ideas in search of a goldmine while blithely ignoring the effects their business policies had on workers' lives and society.<sup>37</sup>

Religiously, Boomers established mega-box churches catering to their individual spiritual quests, led by individuals deemed spiritually gifted. They discarded bound, static hymnals first for flexible leaflets and then with overhead projections, and searched for enhanced sensory and spiritual experiences through praise music with rock band accompaniment, small group ministries, fellowship time with a multitude of beverage and food options, and engaging in church hopping and inter- and intra- denominational wars in search for *the* congregational experience that matched their inner spiritual principals.<sup>38</sup>

## **Gen Xers and Millennials**

Gen X and Millennial generations were born and raised in these decades. Per Eeman, Gen Xers (born 1961 – 1982), the older half of this paper's target audience, are

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 58. Eeman cites Henry Ford and Pittsburg Steel as examples of this latter concept. More recently the rise and fall of both the dot-com the telecom industries gives another concrete example. Massive fortunes were made by a small few over a relatively short period of time while the fallout from the industries' collapse continues to affect society today, including massive consumer debt, overleveraged homes and under funded retirements. In addition, Boomers learned to reduce overhead labor costs by hiring subcontractors and not waged employees, leaving a large proportion of society without health coverage.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 55-57.

Nomads<sup>39</sup> who follow in the wake of an Idealist generation. Their youth was within a society predisposed against them. "...Generation X was born in the 1960s and 1970s, and as exhilarating, freeing or cathartic as those years were for parenting-age adults, they were hell for kids. In the name of freedom, children were freely exposed to all sorts of harsh realities at a very young age: divorce; unstable living-together arrangements; juvenile gangs that beat, robbed and even murdered; and crumbling, even physically dangerous, schools."<sup>40</sup> Paralleling other historical Nomad generations, as the adults around them reacted against strict upbringings Gen Xers were left with unstable family lives, falling health indicators, mediocre schools which they abandoned to search for a better life, and an adult population of Silents that both scorned their generation and did little to provide for their spiritual growth. "...[Bringing] children to Sunday school or Torah study every single week felt too much like their own stringent childhood. In the name of freedom children were left to decide on their own if and when they attended worship and religious instruction", or even if they wished to be baptized.<sup>41</sup> Gen Xers amassed a non-cohesive set of religious experiences, growing up wary and skeptical of religion. "[Historically, Nomad] generations encounter much pain in their lives and they focus their attention on the world around them, alert for the next possible threat. They spend little time on inward exploration because self-protection comes first...they develop

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., xii. Eeman chooses Nomad from Strauss & Howe's dual designation of Reactive and Nomad.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

a strong sense of outward-focused realism. Prayer to an unseen God and the spiritual benefits of religion often sound like a scam to Nomad ears.”<sup>42</sup>

Historically, Nomad generations entering adulthood faced “the debris of an upheaval – social, economic, and cultural...[forming] small groups for survival and protection.” Gen Xers followed this pattern, embracing cell phones, the Internet, and media-generated “families” on TV on the positive end, and gangs on the negative end, in the search for a “surrogate family.” Nomad generations historically have been the implementers of Idealist visions. Gen Xers entered the workforce in the 1980’s during an era of fast, uneven wealth earned with little time or work ethic invested. They became risk-taking entrepreneurs testing (or breaking) existing economic and business rules, experimenting in new technology, and exploring and creating new niches. Their successes, however, has been few and far between, resulting in a generation that is “worse off financially [now] than any other living American generation.” Unlike Boomers, who lived to work 24/7 for their ideals, most Gen Xers work hard to live, often at multiple jobs with little or no benefits.<sup>43</sup> They leave the job behind once the workday ends, “sharpening the distinction between work and home.” They learned working hard for one employer no longer guaranteed a retirement, so, as their earlier counterparts did, they increasingly look for security in the fast buck, the abuse of drugs as an escape, or in the military, which survives on discipline and structure.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>43</sup> See Footnote 24.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 75-77.



Religiously, Nomads strip faith of any gloss, dismissing easy answers to complex questions. They gravitate towards the suffering of God and Christ as authentic counterparts to the suffering, pain, and abandonment felt in their lives.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Eeman suggests that traditional worship styles repel Gen Xers, who were taught by the media, e.g. MTV, to value “in the moment” and highly edited experiences: visual versus oral, interactive versus internal or theoretical, bombardment of activity versus silence, and they come into the church with little or no experience, knowledge or understanding of worship and its meaning.<sup>46</sup>

Millennials, the younger half of our age cohort, comprise those born between 1983 and 2005. Strauss & Howe’s historic patterns project them to be a Civic generation, routinely emerging at the turn of the century in response to a major economic upheaval caused by previous “freewheeling economic policies.”<sup>47</sup> As Eeman wrote his book when Millennials were in their youth, he could only extrapolate towards them attributes from prior Civic generations. The GI’s were the last historic Civic generation, born and raised before and during World War II. They were also the last generation the nation honored for fighting a war on behalf of another people, and for picking up the youngest end of the mantle to help rebuild the nation. Their predecessor Civic generation titled the Progressives, however, expected to emerge from the Civil War to rebuild society, may provide a stronger comparative basis for the upcoming Millennials.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 152.

Unlike the aftermath of the two World Wars, which were waged against common national enemies globally deemed detriments, the Civil War was an internal war, resulting in little post-war national pride. Per Eeman, it actually garnered disrespect versus respect.<sup>48</sup> The war so scarred society, and the young adults emerging from under its carnage, that the new adults delegated the responsibility of rebuilding to their predecessor generation, and assumed the cyclical characteristics of the next expected generation: known as Adaptives.<sup>49</sup> Adaptives historically were raised in times of technological progress, economic upheaval, and political crisis, hearing “frightened adults bitterly debating issues surrounding labor unions, the role of government, capitalism, and foreign wars. In such [times,] churches stress the fundamentals of the faith, becoming sources of comfort and mutual support. Worship forms follow denominational norms, and a great deal of energy and time is spent on providing practical relief and assistance.”<sup>50</sup> Eeman provides little comparison, however, between the negative impacts the Civil War had on the Progressives and the positive impacts WWII had on the Silents, in order to extrapolate what to expect from Millennials. In addition, as *Generations in Faith* carries a 2002 copyright, Eeman could not predict the events of 9/11/2001 would result in America mired in the war in Iraq, which may not even attain the moral stature of the Civil War, and for which the end still is not in sight. Thus, the attributes Eeman, Strauss, and Howe gleaned from all prior Civic/Adaptive generations, who rallied from completed conflicts to positively rebuild society, are not utilized in this

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 28.

paper. Millennials are still mired in a society of adults frightened by the war, the economy, and the impact of human policies and actions on the environment and global humanity.

One major factor Eeman does not address also suggests historical Adaptive actions and reactions would be misleading: for the first time in American history the concept that God and God's rules and punishment are either secondary or irrelevant is a viewpoint taught to and promulgated by both genders. Historically, males received higher education where rationalism flourished, while females were at home being raised by, and subsequently raising children, with religious morals.<sup>51</sup> The effect of the 1960's social revolution, wherein females won the right to remove social constraints and avail themselves of advanced education and careers, resulted in religion as a mitigating moral compass taught by women in the home no longer functioning in American society. The generations of incoming adults, both male and female, come now with little or no educational experience from home, school, church, workplace, or government, of God keeping human desires and pursuits in check. At the same time, Western civilization has shifted from a production culture duty-bound to each other and subsequent generations, to a consumption culture primarily self-bound, fueled no longer by the guilt of a deity but by the guilt of peer pressure and negative marketing.<sup>52</sup>

James Côte, speaking about adults and adolescents in the 1990's from a Canadian sociological professor's viewpoint, expects Western civilization's shift from a "duty-

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<sup>51</sup> John Corrigan and Winthrop W. Hudson, Seventh ed., *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2004), 301-302.

<sup>52</sup> Côte, *Arrested Adulthood*, 92; 98.

bound” to “self-absorbed” society to significantly undermine generational continuity, affecting the welfare of future generations.<sup>53</sup> Côte sees the lack of connection in the current incoming adults to either histories or core selves as “enslavement to a contingent world.” As youth they looked to society for validation, creating a vulnerable self-definition “acutely sensitive to the opinion of others...easily shaped and controlled through psychological threats and anxieties...Consequently, threats to their psychological well-being are often mistaken as threats to their survival, probably because their sense of identity is involved.” Côte expects ultimately the replacement of developmental pathways traditionally provided by society and institutions with those promulgated by mass marketing and consumerism to impede youth’s segue into adulthood.<sup>54</sup>

Looking at this age group from a more positive outlook, Sharon Daloz Parks reminds us in her book *Big Questions Worthy Dreams* that, regardless of background and external influences, the “*twentysomething*” decade between the ages of seventeen and thirty is a transitional decade, one she terms Young Adult.<sup>55</sup> It bridges childhood and the attainment of Mature Adulthood, continuing what Parks describes as “human becoming.”<sup>56</sup> “Becoming” involves faith as meaning making: searching for one’s own

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 195-197.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>55</sup> Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 91. This term is somewhat troubling. The word “becoming” implies one is not human without going through the transitional stages presented, and/or the existence of a perfected state of “being” humans are ascending towards on some form of path. It also implies a judgment by others regarding which stage a person resides at, and if they are moving correctly.

understanding of reality<sup>57</sup> in order to “feel at home in the universe.”<sup>58</sup> It is a “dance between self and other...reflecting “two great yearnings”: one for differentiation, autonomy, and agency, and the other for relation, belonging, and communion.”<sup>59</sup>

Building on Robert Kegan’s transitions between forms of consciousness,<sup>60</sup> Parks posits a person transitions from Childhood to Mature Adult first by shifting from an infantile dependence on Absolute authority<sup>61</sup> to an inner-dependence on oneself,<sup>62</sup> and finally by shifting from inner-dependence on oneself to interdependence with others.<sup>63</sup>

For Parks, Young Adults are in the process of finding their voice in the mix of authority they choose to guide their lives. They are transitioning into mature humans by

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., xi. Parks defines faith as “meaning making.” Chapter 3 explores faith’s definition as the human activity of making meaning out of the surrounding forces in order to find that in the universe on which to invest one’s heart and trust in – akin to Luther’s explanation to the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment that our god is anything in which we place our full heart, our full trust.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press; 1994). 1-36. Kegan hypothesizes that a person transitions through orders of consciousness that assign relative weight to sets of meaning held by oneself and others. One begins in childhood with only a single view of life; maturity and social abilities come from the ability to integrate views held by others with one’s own – first by seeing them hierarchically and then as related but different.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 54-55. Absolute Authority is the initial “form of knowing” wherein what one “ultimately trusts, knows, and believes is finally based on some [outside] Authority”, be it media, cultural roles and personalities, or customs, or even a view of God unable to be questioned or known. Continued on p. 74: “At the time of Authority-bound knowing, it follows quite logically that a person’s sense of world is dependent upon an uncritically assumed Authority...[one] may be able to give a variety of logical reasons for holding a particular point of view but, if pressed, eventually reveals an unexamined trust in an authoritative other outside the self.”

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 77. “[The] developmental movement into inner-dependence occurs when one is able self-consciously to include the self within the arena of authority. In other words, other sources of authority may still hold credible power, but now one can also recognize and value the authority of one’s own voice.”

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 86. Interdependence recognizes “A person’s center of primary trust now resides neither in the assumed authority of another, not in the courageously claimed authority of the inner self. Rather, trust is now centered in the meeting of self and other, in the recognition of the strength and finitude of each, and in the promise of the truth that emerges in relation. This trust takes the form of a profound, self-aware conviction of interdependence.”

shifting from reliance on an external authority to a reliance on one's inner self; ultimately, they may settle part way, embracing a shared authority between self and other, recognizing and affirming the positives and limitations of each authoritative source. It is in this transitional decade that Parks posits mentoring by trusted adults is paramount.

#### Empirical Studies: Arnett and Anderson, et al

*Emerging Adulthood* by Jeffrey Arnett, a psychology research professor, echoes both Côte's findings that social markers of adulthood no longer exist, and Parks positive valuation of the transitional experience.<sup>64</sup> Arnett interviewed people in their late teens through twenties (assumed during the late 1990's and early 2000's from his initial 2004 publication).<sup>65</sup> His conclusions: today's road to adulthood is filled with freedom of choice, an "exciting" period of "independent exploration" combining "high hopes and big dreams" with anxiety and uncertainty.<sup>66</sup> It is a time of "exploration and instability" wherein self-development moves them from "possibilities" to "real life."<sup>67</sup> Their relationships with parents, whether positive or negative, are still highly charged emotionally, and nearly always of primary influence in their lives.<sup>68</sup> They have full freedom regarding when and with whom they will have sex, and whether it includes love;

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<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), v.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 71.

but freedom brings consequences, fears for life and safety, and does not facilitate finding a life-partner. Flexible relationships translate into flexibility marriages: happening only when, with whom, and as long as it suits the individual. Marriage carries similar fears to love and sex: the fear of death of the relationship by divorce, causing delay in commitment until they “feel” the time is right.<sup>69</sup> College, according to Arnett, is their “safe haven” for exploration and experimentation, “the emerging adult environment par excellence,” but only for those who can obtain financing as the gap between costs and public funding widens. A college education’s ability to enhance one’s future earning potential continues to attract young adults, determining which work they will choose to define their identity within society; consequently, seeking identity through work supercedes the assumption of “stressful” family obligations. The increased societal and financial expectations placed on adults, plus a limited job market geared towards technology, widens the resulting income gap between those with marketable abilities and educational opportunities and those without.<sup>70</sup>

On religion, Arnett echoes Parks, positing positive results from exposure to a potpourri of religious experiences. Beliefs and values have “little relation between what they were exposed to by their parents...[their beliefs and] their values are the product of their own ruminations on their life experiences and observation.”<sup>71</sup> Unlike Côte’s view that self-defined values stem from self-absorption, Arnett presents their “doubt [of] the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 186-187

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 186-187

morality of [religious] institutions” as a positive basis allowing young adults to determine from their exploration on what they will base their lives and morals.<sup>72</sup>

David Anderson, Paul Hill and Roland Martinson brought their joint experience as pastors, seminary youth ministry professors, and youth initiative directors to their book, *Coming of Age*, an empirical study of eighty-eight young men coming of age in Spring, 2003.<sup>73</sup> While they confined their research and findings to the important needs and ministry for today’s young males, many findings relate across gender lines.

Through their interviews, Anderson, Hill & Martinson identified seven major themes that affected the men’s lives: (1) Relationships: the desire for close interpersonal relationships, of belonging to a family through which they can learn values, beliefs and lifestyles, with a deep appreciation for role models to emulate for “sacrifices...high standards of truth-telling and honest living, taught through personal, trusted relationships.”<sup>74</sup> (2) Nature and sports: seeking to understand God and God’s community through a deep awareness of one’s body plus a search for an authentic relationship within non-human, non-verbal, physical and competitive creation, seen as the “source and setting for finding what is true, reliable and meaningful.”<sup>75</sup> (3) Life defining experiences: the presence or absence of key challenges and experiences in life, positive and negative, providing “an active search for core commitments;” the overcoming of challenges

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson et al, *Coming of Age*, 14; 183.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 43, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 54, 61.



contributing to the definition of their identity.<sup>76</sup> (4) Crisis, stress, and a balanced life: the context within which they have had to deal with significant pain, distress or fear, impacted by whether they have had older mentors or congregational support to guide them in time of crisis.<sup>77</sup> (5) Service and Care for Others: how they have, or have not, been mentored, taught, and/or reshaped to value serving another, whether through coached sports, church ministry projects and responsibilities, or community social work.<sup>78</sup> (6) Work and Avocation: how work and leisure activities connect to the presence and action of God in the world.<sup>79</sup> (7) Spiritual hunger: “the desire to authentically be one’s self and make sense out of one’s life and one’s world...[searching] for meaning in one’s daily existence and hopes for the future... [seeking] consistency and honesty between one’s conduct and one’s understandings of life and God.”<sup>80</sup> The authors base whether today’s Christian church life can satisfy this search on the extent to which cultural morality has pervaded it. “One factor that may be distancing these young men from church and the language of historic Christianity is that the church has been “colonized” by [a] generic religious tradition that no longer needs God’s life and activity to support it. Whether from within or outside the church, cultural Christianity does look more like Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 92-94.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 101, 122.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 127-129.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 162.

In short, Anderson, Hill and Martinson's view of this age group's quest resonates across the sociological and theological insights explored in this paper. This age group seeks Authenticity, Equality, and Mutuality: "Be real, show respect, work together."<sup>82</sup> This age group recognizes that human society lacks the ability to interact honestly and fairly with each other. They seek relationships not only with peers but also with mentors of all ages who can provide boundaries and models for right living. They seek strong interaction with all of creation as body and soul, and they seek a God who advocates and models those qualities they yearn for.

### Sin and Our Age Cohort

The incoming adults have learned from preceding generations of rationalists and scientists that God, and therefore God's definition of sin, its consequences, and God's solutions, are irrelevant if not nonexistent. As reason and science advanced, and societal structures based on a relationship with God receded, human growth and activity were taught as stages within which one must achieve a combined reliance on self and others in the quest to become a perfected human: the goal in itself without relation to an external entity.<sup>83</sup> Sublimating a dependence on God to a co-dependence on multiple human-defined opinions became the desired end – no longer seen as human sin. Even theologians seeking to understand this age group, and how to best mentor them, recognize and uphold their intrinsic goodness but avoid overt discussion of their bondage

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>83</sup> Parks, *Big Questions*, 74-77.

to sin and what impact teaching the implications of this bondage might have on their subject's lives.

Yet even with a sense of self ostensibly validated by society, and even when raised within the ELCA and its predecessors, where discussion of saint and sinner at least had a fighting chance, incoming adults are disinterested with mainline expressions of God and search for the answers to life without understanding where to begin. Being taught they are capable of perfection – perfection of self and the ability to perfect society and their environment – they can only become disillusioned when those exhorting perfection show themselves to be imperfect, and impatient when religions tell them they require an external entity or deity to enable their perfection. Religious folk become seen as either bastions of hypocrisy or spinners of fables.

I propose there is a common tie between the increased sense of entitlement and validation-by-others cited by Côte,<sup>84</sup> the movement away from church cited by Anderson, et al, and a statistical finding by Fink and Stark correlating the growth of denominations that hold people accountable to God with the corresponding decline in mainline churches:<sup>85</sup> the imbalance towards an overarching emphasis on God's love for humanity with a corresponding neglect of understanding humanity will remain sin filled until death, and that God's loving solution is to create a new life by killing the old – a death as real as any other death.

It is precisely the paradox of understanding you and every member of humanity, past, present, and future, will always be sinful to the core, and that God has dealt your sin

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<sup>84</sup> Côte, *Arrested Adulthood*, 195-197.

<sup>85</sup> Fink and Stark, *Generations*, 249.

by the illogical means of your death through forgiveness, that is missing for this incoming generation of adults. As a consequence, this loss reinforces the pattern of viewing oneself as capable of being perfect, and creating a perfect world with or without God, and finally judging others along the same standard of unattainable perfection. Luther's ultimate paradox of freedom through voluntary subjugation, illogically trusting God implicitly to use you up for others by killing your sinful self, is an answer dying to be heard.

### **Developing the Curriculum**

The attached curriculum was created to begin the task of presenting Luther's original theology to a new generation. In order to do so it was logical to start where Luther started: with the catechisms Luther designed as "Bible Basics" courses – and with the Decalogue as Luther began both works.

The curriculum explores Luther's Large Catechism explanation to each commandment as a means of presenting Christ's words from Matthew: God's law encompasses every thought, word and deed (5:21-48) of one's relationship with God and with others (22:37-40). The medium of film was chosen to creatively allow a study group to contrast God's commands with the ramifications of human reality. The group curriculum includes discussion questions and learning tasks encouraging both group and individual processing and reflection on the implications of the commandments.

Emerging adults were chosen as the primary target audience for three reasons: (1) their disenfranchisement from organized religion is freshest and therefore less

entrenched, (2) making it possible for the curriculum to present an alternate thought process during their transitional years, when cognitive development enables them to move from blind adherence to childhood authorities to adult choice of to whom to grant agency for authority in their lives, and (3) their ingrained familiarity with current technology most easily allows film to provide safe access for studying the human condition. That said, the theological exploration and choice of films in the curriculum is suitable to all adults above 18; it is not, however, intended for a younger audience due to the film content chosen and their anticipated level of cognitive development.

The voice utilized within the curriculum is more informal by design, to encourage engagement with the content. An intentional voice of the particular – of speaking directly to the individual learner – implements Luther’s exhortation to proclaim God, not preach about God. It recognizes that, whether God is creating the cosmos and earth, a new creature within us, recognition of sin, or proclaiming forgiveness of sin, God of Scripture creates new life through the verbal word of proclamation in the particular to the individual. It also creates the confrontation Norma Cook Everist discusses in her eight facets of effective teaching to adults, one of four curriculum design methods utilized in this design.<sup>86</sup>

### Enabling Learning and Effective Teaching

The curriculum was designed utilizing the Backwards Design approached taught in Luther Seminary course “Equipping People for Teaching & Learning” (EL3521-S6

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<sup>86</sup> Norma Cook Everist, *The Church As Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002). 105-145.

Spring 2006, Vicky Goplin), which utilized curriculum design principles from Wiggins and Jay McTighe.<sup>87</sup> Appendix B presents the design grid completed in tandem with creating the curriculum, allowing me to view the interconnection of all lessons simultaneously. The curriculum was also designed to incorporate Jane Vella's twelve principles enabling adult learning,<sup>88</sup> Norma Everist's eight categories of effective teaching, and Howard Gardner's eight categories of intelligences.<sup>89</sup> Appendixes C, D, and E, respectively, describe these principles and their application to the curriculum.

The curriculum was created as follows: for each commandment (a) read Luther's Large Catechism explanation to the commandment; (b) chose a film to reflect the commandment and Luther's explanation; (c) review the film with Luther's explanation in mind; (d) create a reflection to present Luther's explanation; (e) extract the Enduring Understanding from the reflection to provide the goal of the lesson; (f) develop open ended questions and reflective activities, through both group discussion and self-reflection, to allow learners to explore how the commandment, the reflection and the film relate to their lives. Questions that were worthy but did not lead learners to the lesson goal were retained in the last column of the grid.

## **Section 1: How to Use The Curriculum**

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<sup>87</sup> Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, (ASCD, 1998)

<sup>88</sup> Jane Vella, revised ed. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adult*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002). 5-27.

<sup>89</sup> Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

In the introduction the curriculum is presented, along with its anticipated goal: providing exploration of the Decalogue via Luther's explanation to the Large Catechism and current film media, with the goal of enabling understanding of the human condition and the means of God working within it.

Specific components of the curriculum and its underlying thought process are as follows:

### **Lesson One: What Are the Commandments And What Are They For?**

Based on the defined target audience, little or no Biblical or theological understanding is presupposed. The introductory material provides a base level of understanding for all group participants, upon which the material following will rely. The material is the first week's lesson; discussion questions and reflective activities are included.

### **Lessons Two through Ten: Utilizing Film to Explore the Commandments**

Starting with Week 2, a first exercise of reviewing how the prior lesson "interpreted" the learner throughout the week is suggested in the guidelines. One commandment is then explored first through the written reflection on Luther's explanation and then with a film. Discussion questions are provided to enable exploration and reflection as a group. Depending on the size of the group, the curriculum suggests the questions should be first discussed between only 2-4 people to enable the maximum voices to be heard, after which all discuss the findings as a whole. Reflection activities

for the home invite the learner into further exploration in the manner that each person chooses, enabling learning through multiple intelligences.

### **Lesson Eleven: Help??!**

The final lesson allows learners to recap with each other personal lessons learned from the movies, discussions, and reflective activities; in particular, how the curriculum allowed each learner to explore their relationship with humanity, with God and God's relationship with them. Finally, it asks the learners to consider how the curriculum failed, and what media, questions, or activities would have been better suited for the learning goal. This final question intentionally invites the learner to become the teacher –to internalize the crux of the lessons, compare it to material they already know, and explore additional insights with each other.

This curriculum was designed as the first in a series and focused only on the commandments. The final lesson anticipates future installments will explore the remainder of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms by leaving the question of God's solution as open.

### **Appendixes**

The Appendixes provide two sets of suggestions for the group. First are a set of guidelines for creating and participating in a study group around the material. It strongly suggests use within a group environment, rather than on one's own, to facilitate



engagement with viewpoints other than one's own; at the same time it recognizes the length of time with a movie may require home viewing of the film and group discussion. It gives suggestions for creating a safe environment and encouraging participation that affirms each person's right to an opinion, and a method of expression, and is structured to mitigate domination by one person. Discussion questions are explained as open ended, with no answers provided, encouraging and affirming the individual's ability to uncover their current thoughts and allow new thoughts to be considered. Learning tasks, centered around individually or group expressed reflection through activity such as writing, dance, music, skit, art, are suggested for the learners to engage in over the week following the film. The guidelines suggest each week start by allowing learners to share insights gleaned since the previous movie, if desired. The second set of suggestions is a session timeline for keeping the lessons within a maximum of 3 1/2 hours, if the movie is viewed within the lesson. As the films run between ~ 100 minutes to ~140 minutes, the time for discussion will be determined by the group dynamics. Home viewing of the movie combined with group discussion is also an option, as is completely individual study.

### The Use of Film for Exploration

Film, whether for educational or entertainment purposes, provides a safe environment through which human dilemmas and moral judgments can be explored and discussed, similar to a driver training simulator. Film combines a controllable response outside of the actual scenario, with an uncontrollable environment wherein the actions, thoughts, emotions, and settings are chosen by the filmmakers and actors, not by the

learner. Film also works to the emotional core of an individual more than print media can, through visuals and sounds chosen specifically by production designers and composers. In addition, the uncontrollable aspects of film facilitates a different dynamic in group discussion, by providing the same visual and aural experience to each group participant; unlike print media wherein each individual imagination creates its own “movie” of setting, sights and sounds. Film eliminates a layer of disparity that may or may not be recognizable by the participants.

The impetus for utilizing film as a means of exploring theology came from my use of the book, *Finding God in the Dark: Taking the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to the Movies*,<sup>90</sup> in Dr. Hess’ Luther Seminary Educational Leadership Class “Proactive Ministries in a Media Culture,” in Fall, 2005. Four groups of ten films were chosen by the authors for the four weeks of spiritual exercises in order to probe aspects of the human nature most likely far removed from one’s own experience. The authors prompted the learner through their spiritual journey by comparing the characters’ moral choices with the learner’s potential choice. The same rationale was employed in the decision to choose film as the mechanism for exploring Luther’s catechism, and in the choice of films selected for each commandment.

Each film highlights the human characteristic addressed by the commandment, and invites the learners to explore the implications of our human frailties, God’s command to live our relationships through humbleness and accountability to God and forgiveness with each other, and our need for Christ to be able to do so. In addition, a

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<sup>90</sup> John Pungente, SJ and Monty Williams SJ, *Finding God in the Dark: Taking the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to the Movies*, (Ottawa, Canada: Novalis, 2004).

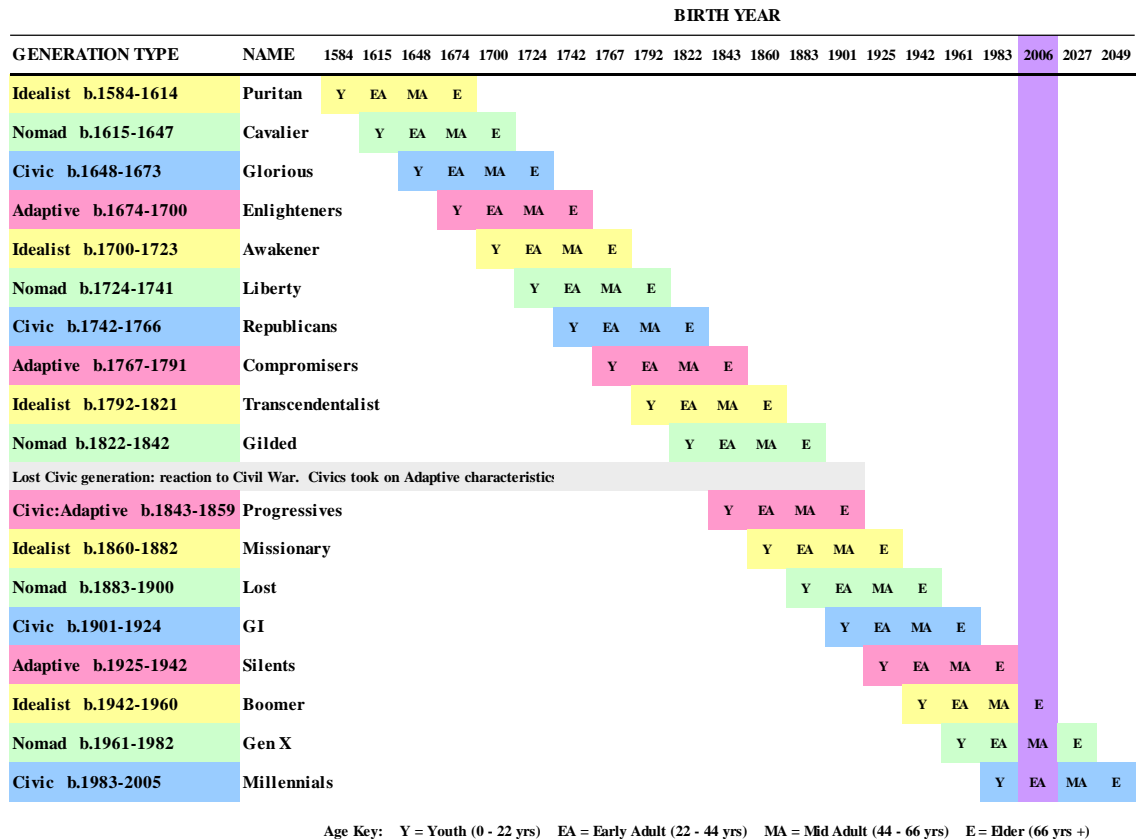
concerted effort was made to select films for a variety of adults with varying tolerances for movie content. Movies dealing in overt violence, sex and explicit language were excluded, though the social content of some films, like *Crash*, grittily explore aspects of life often avoided in real life. Appendix F correlates the commandment themes with the films chosen.

### **Summary**

The integration of Luther and God into educational theory takes theoretical cognitive and spiritual developmental stages to another level, another form of consciousness if you will, attainable only by claiming God and permanent sin as categorical truths and dynamic components of meaning making. It is a consciousness that rejects a hierarchy of perfection attainable by humanity; at the same time it does not negate human growth documented by other models. It presupposes a trust that another dimension of relationship exists outside of human existence and control, a relationship with the God of Scriptures as the source, creator, protector, and sustainer of all, who calls humans to God-defined identities and service towards others. Voluntarily subjugating one's understanding of identity to those defined by God allows God to create a paradigm shift within, wherein it is understood that all people are seen equal by God as imperfect, sinful humans who God wholly loves and also wholly holds accountable to God and to each other. It tills the ground for the verbal preacher to sow God's Gospel through proclamation, which will eradicate the old and create the new, allowing true mentoring, teaching, and relationships to blossom.

## Appendix A Strauss & Howe's American Generational Designations 1584 – 2004

Source: Eeman, *Generations of Faith*, 27; 49; 71; 94.



**Note:** As with any categorization Strauss & Howe's generational and life age brackets are only generalizations. The following problem has been noted with their standard 22 year age brackets within one generation, and their assumption that parents are always two generations behind their children (e.g. Silents begat Gen Xers, Boomers begat Millenials). As the chart indicates, the combination of these two assumptions with their defined start years of each generation, asserts the majority of babies within each generation are born to middle aged parents in their 40's and 50's. Shorter life spans and the realities of pregnancies within history are not accounted for.

## Appendix B

### LESSON PLAN DESIGN GRID

Source: Handout- Luther Sem EL3521-S6 Spring 2006: “Equipping People for Teaching & Learning”  
<http://ssteacher3.tripod.com/equipping/id1.html> Accessed 11-01-2006.

Based on Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, (ASCD, 1998)

#	Material	L=Enduring Understanding	Acceptable Evidence of Understand.	L=Important to Know For Understanding	Important to Do As Group	Important to Do: Reflection	Worthy But Less Important
1	Intro	All law comes from God, and God's law protect life	Discuss, participate and reflect  <i>*Note: page length for this MA paper precluded adding in a film at this point. When used in real life a film would be chosen to explore law as good and necessary boundaries for safety</i>	*Matt 5:21-48 God law is re: thought word & deed *Decl=codified God's law given to all people *Evidenced: law across cultures and time *What are OT & NT? (assume no church knowledge) *Luther used catechism to teach commandments *Luther's explanation = Christ's expansion	Q: How have laws changed? Q: When should laws change? Q: Who gets to decide? Q: Any external standard that doesn't change? Q: Compare situational ethics to ontological ethics – when do humans choose between? Q: Luther insisted theology must be grounded in Scripture. Must laws be grounded in Scripture?	Q: When others nix the law to suit self Q: When we nix law to suit self A: Create reflection on laws	*Nomadic laws: Jewish Gentiles are held to *Natural law *How to accomplish the law: this curric on law; gospel comes later *Historical Luther *History of American belief in God / Deity, and its impact on American law
2	1 <sup>st</sup> Honor God	We all have a god	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Matt: heart is where treasure is. *Luther: we all have a god *Different things we expect to keep us secure	R: Review reflections F: <i>Crash</i> Q: Explore what god's are in our world Q: Explore what our god's are	Q: Gods observed in world Q: What our God is Q: Change god = change life? A: Create reflection on self and God	*God as liberator deserves honor / use for curr. on Gospel *
3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Honor God's name	God's name holds immense power	Discuss, participate and reflect	*God's name was feared in OT *God's name not a fig leaf to hide behind *Use to call on God	R: Review reflections F: <i>Spirited Away</i> Q: Why do kids make up names to hurt? Learned? Q: How do adults continue the pattern? Q: How is God's name used in today's society? Q: How do we honor God's name?	Q: Notice when, how & why people use your name, and when you others'. Q: How do you name & define God? A: Create reflection on your name and identity	*Discussion of swearing vs. vows *Kids using names to hurt

#	Material	L=Enduring Understanding	Acceptable Evidence of Understand.	L=Important to Know For Understanding	Important to Do As Group	Important to Do: Reflection	Worthy But Less Important
4	3 <sup>rd</sup> Honor day of rest	God's words bring life and recreation.	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Mark 2: sabbath made for man *Day is holy by God's Word acting on the day and in us *God's verbal word creates life from chaos, faith where there is none	R: Review reflections F: <i>Santa Clause</i> Q: God's word = life, sin = you're dead. Luther said there's nothing you can do – you remain dead. How do you feel?	Q: How does God recreate you? Set aside time for God's Word?	*Direct and strong tie to baptism – Needs to be deferred to Gospel
5	4 <sup>th</sup> Honor parents	God delegated authority to keep us safe	Discuss, participate and reflect	*BB *We understand after we have been seen and acknowledged, and hear the story. sin? law? *How each responded to authority	R: Review reflections F: <i>Joy Luck Club</i> Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	*Needs of individual vs community. * Human sin misuses authority; does not equate God as authority = sin
6	5 <sup>th</sup> Honor life	Protecting life including your enemy's	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Matt 5:21-28 killing incl anger *Revenge = God's and authority's *Let go even when life is endangered? *	R: Review reflections F: <i>Insomnia</i> Q: non stop light / exposing sin / god's law=light Q:	Q: When do you seek revenge? Q: when have you wanted to kill someone? When have you? trust in God?	*Envy for things *Killing includes reputation & self esteem (use for 8 <sup>th</sup> )
7	6 <sup>th</sup> Honor spouses	Marriage and families were not options to God	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Marriage highest vocation *Supports families	R: Review reflections F: <i>Moonstruck</i> Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	*Against monastic as highest
8	7 <sup>th</sup> Honor ownership	We are to protect property others have	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Covert theft *Overt worse *Not stopping theft even worse *Carelessness, worker, *Punishment comes	R: Review reflections F: <i>Key Largo</i> Q: Why do people steal? Q: ways people do Q: God's punishment a deterrent? Q: entitlement Q: ways to stand up? courage.	Q: How do you steal? Q: How do others steal from you?	*Seeking a better life vs be content *NAFTA *Theft of various forms of property & fraud.
9	8 <sup>th</sup> Honor reputations	Do Unto Others Only Good	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Relates to stealing/ main possess *Lie to gain, *Help retain legal rights/juries *Do not judge or Gossip *Tell privately to improve the other	R: Review reflections F: <i>Good Night/Luck</i> Q: Stopping gossip Q: Determine the false preacher? Q:	Q: Note gossip / able to say no? Q: Painful?	*Detailed discussion of lying to gain, oppressing those who cant afford trials *

#	Material	L=Enduring Understanding	Acceptable Evidence of Understand.	L=Important to Know For Understanding	Important to Do As Group	Important to Do: Reflection	Worthy But Less Important
10	Curb your desire to obtain	We all scheme to obtain more through thought, word and deed	Discuss, participate and reflect	*Even if legal, do not entice * *	R: Review reflections F: <i>All About Eve</i> Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	Q: == see curriculum / wrote questions directly into paper	
11	Help??!!	See Jesus see God – God is the source of all	Discuss, participate and reflect	See Jesus see God John 14:9	Q: Review reflections over entire series Q: what would you change? Q: if we have defined the problem, what is the solution? – sets up further exploration of the commandments	Reflect on lessons learned	*Expanded exploration of gospel *Further exploration of catechism *Another film

## Appendix C

### Vella's 12 Principles For Effective Adult Learning

Source: Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 3-27.

PRINCIPLE	PURPOSE / GOAL	HOW ADDRESSED IN THIS CURRICULUM
<b>Needs assessment</b>	Discover what group needs to learn, what they already know, what aspects of the course really fit their situation. Dialogue to listen to wants and needs helps to shape the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research: reading empirical research on who age cohort is and what are they seeking; discerning what components are missing from their life puzzle.</li> <li>Relevancy: via current events tie to various social debates of the day; via film explore common themes between all generations.</li> <li>LIMITS: time constraint against involving cohort to define their needs for this curriculum, artificial page constraints for MA paper truncated length of discussion and number of questions.</li> </ul>
<b>Safety in environment and process</b>	Convey to learners the experience will work for them via competency of design, feasibility & relevance, encouraging voices, sequencing of events, requesting non-judgmental environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction explains the perceived needs assessment that undergirds the curriculum.</li> <li>Chose films skirting edge of comfort but not overtly edgy.</li> <li>Allowed learner to choose mode of reflections.</li> <li>Created discussion questions for exploration, discussion, and reflection.</li> <li>Suggested group setting and guidelines to promote safe environment for exploration.</li> <li>LIMITS: can only suggest guidelines, am not actually facilitating the discussion.</li> </ul>
<b>Sound relationships between learners</b>	Involving respect, safety, open communication, listening and humility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided suggested guidelines for enabling goals</li> <li>LIMITS: cannot enforce guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>Sequence of content and reinforcement</b>	Sequence content from easy to difficult, from simple to complex, from group to solo. Reinforce by repeating facts, skills, & attitudes in diverse, engaging and interesting ways, in the class and outside of class, until learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequencing: design of questions move from general discussion to personal reflection, from group to home reflection and return for reflection on prior week</li> <li>Reinforcement: group discussion through questions, home exploration and suggested next week reflection on learning from past week..</li> <li>LIMITS: not on site to modify curriculum in real time; time constraint against implementing curriculum and integrating discovered needs prior to project deadline.</li> </ul>



PRINCIPLE	PURPOSE / GOAL	HOW ADDRESSED IN THIS CURRICULUM
<b>Praxis: action with reflection or learning by doing</b>	Integrating learning tasks that allow learner to practice skills and reflect on the practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilizing film and discussion to explore human truths commandments illuminate, rather than teaching top-down</li> <li>Encouraging reflection of life they will encounter between film sessions.</li> <li><b>LIMITS:</b> Reflections have been limited to questions and solo reflections with only a few added learning tasks for group time. Time constraints and paper length preclude full design and integration of learning tasks, such as role playing, to “do” the commandments in a real time setting</li> </ul>
<b>Respect for learners as decision makers</b>	Create an open system inviting critical analysis, editing, and additions to material by adult learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion questions were designed open ended for analysis from various perspectives</li> <li>Final week includes discussion of how learners would change each commandment if enabled to</li> <li>Final week reflection includes discussing how they would change the medium chosen for reflection of categorical commandment.</li> <li><b>LIMITS:</b></li> </ul>
<b>Balancing three aspects of learning – ideas, feelings and actions – in the learning process</b>	Balancing information presented with reflection and engagement, paying attention to feelings and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas: presenting introductory material, commandment and Luther’s reflections</li> <li>Feelings: discussion questions and reflective activities that include exploring feelings and emotions</li> <li>Actions: watching film, participating in discussion; reflection through chosen expression throughout week</li> <li><b>LIMITS:</b> can only suggest weekly reflection, actual action is learner’s choice</li> </ul>
<b>Immediacy of the learning</b>	Enabling the adult to comprehend how the learning affects them now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion questions include what the process per commandment has taught them about themselves; how what they discovered could be utilized in life.</li> </ul>
<b>Clear roles and role development</b>	Enable learners to participate in the learning process. Respect and teach that learners voluntarily give agency for authority to the materials and the leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Film: film allows the learners to watch the same information but develop their own initial set of results</li> <li>Open ended discussion questions, combined with respect guidelines, allows learners to keep or modify their initial set of results</li> <li>The final question asks learners to critique the film and medium choice made</li> </ul>
<b>Teamwork and use of small groups</b>	Utilize voluntarily chosen teams to engage learning from peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines for setting up the learning environment suggest having initial discussions between 2-4 people who then interact as a larger group</li> <li>Guidelines for processing during the week suggest interacting with a smaller group from the whole to continue the discussion</li> </ul>

PRINCIPLE	PURPOSE / GOAL	HOW ADDRESSED IN THIS CURRICULUM
<b>Engaging learners in what they are learning</b>	Invite learners to engage themselves actively in the strategic issues of the learning activity and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The majority of the curriculum was developed without learner input. The learner is asked to consider, and discuss with the group, how they would modify the curriculum for the future, encouraging critical analysis and strategic planning for their own method of engaging others with the material.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability: how do they know they know</b>	<p>Learning materials must be accountable to the learners (what was proposed to be taught was taught)</p> <p>Learners are accountable to team to participate and to themselves to implement what was learned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The materials have been designed to understand the reason for the commandments and to explore their implications through Luther and by analyzing human action seen through film.</li> <li>▪ Learner participation is suggested through guidelines</li> <li>▪ LIMITS: the curriculum is created for use by others. Guidelines can only suggest, they cannot enforce accountability or participation by others.</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

### EVERIST'S 8 FACETS OF LEARNING

Source: Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*, 103-148.

FACET	PURPOSE / GOAL	HOW ADDRESSED IN THIS CURRICULUM
<b>Community</b>	Affirm the community; the ways the learners are being teachers together, the way the community nurtures growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The guidelines presented attempt to facilitate the created community of the study group.</li> <li>▪ LIMITS: The guidelines can only be suggestions.</li> </ul>
<b>Presentation</b>	Present material to facilitate the learner not the presenter; demonstrate a belief in the content; select the appropriate teaching style and present it well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was the goal to present material in an accessible and creative manner to facilitate the learner's exposure to the material. How well the goal was accomplished will vary with each group that utilizes it.</li> </ul>
<b>Discussion</b>	Enable discussion to claim a concept, think about it, create and shape a new thought, and put into words. Choose a learning style to encourage the self to emerge, set guidelines that acknowledge sin and the need for forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The discussion of the material is built in.</li> <li>▪ The guidelines were written to implement acknowledging and forgiving sin.</li> </ul>
<b>Study</b>	Enable people to study at their learning edge. Enable comprehensive, in-depth growth through inductive study. Empower action through allowing questioning, understanding, and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The curriculum analyzes human life through the lens of the commandments, Luther's explanations, and film. Group discussion and self-reflection provide various opportunities empowering action.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	Balance conformity and individuality of teaching styles and expected rates to enable the learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Group and self-work are provided to balance different learning needs and styles.</li> </ul>
<b>Confrontation</b>	Balance curriculum between confrontation and internal reflection, maintaining the goal of a world reconciled in Christ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Group and self-work were designed to balance confrontation and reflection. Commandments point the learners to a world reconciled in Christ.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience</b>	Allow the learner to grow through experiential tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning tasks are provided through weekly self-reflection activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection</b>	Facilitate reflection by the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflection is encouraged through group discussion and self-reflection activities.</li> </ul>

## Appendix E

### GARDNER'S 8 MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Source: Handout-Luther Sem: EL3524-F6 Spring 2006: Intergenerational Christian Education

INTELLIGENCE	DESCRIPTION	HOW ADDRESSED IN THIS CURRICULUM
Verbal-Linguistic	Involves reading, writing, speaking, and conversing in one's own or foreign languages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading material, writing activities, group discussions.</li> </ul>
Logical-Mathematical	Involves number and computing skills, recognizing patterns and relationships, timeliness and order, and the ability to solve different kinds of problems through logic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of material to film, commandment, and life through open-ended questions and activities.</li> </ul>
Visual-Spatial	Involves visual perception of the environment, the ability to create and manipulate mental images, and the orientation of the body in space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Viewing film, accessing memory of scenes for discussion.</li> </ul>
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Involves physical coordination and dexterity, using fine and gross motor skills, and expressing oneself or learning through physical activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-reflection learning activities allow learner to choose the best style to fit their needs.</li> </ul>
Musical	Involves understanding and expressing oneself through music and rhythmic movements or dance, or composing, playing or conducting music.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-reflection learning activities allow learner to choose the best style to fit their needs.</li> </ul>
Interpersonal	Involves understanding how to communicate with and understand other people and how to work collaboratively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group discussions</li> </ul>
Intrapersonal	Involves understanding one's inner world of emotions and thoughts, and growing in the ability to control them and work with them consciously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group discussions and self-reflections.</li> </ul>
Naturalist	Involves understanding the natural world of plants and animals, noticing their characteristics, and categorizing them; it generally involves keen observation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-reflection learning activities allow learner to choose the best style to fit their needs.</li> </ul>

## Appendix F

### CORRELATION OF COMMANDMENT THEMES TO FILMS CHOSEN

COMMANDMENT: THEME: FILM: CORRELATION
<p><b>1: God Is Your Only Protection: <i>Crash</i></b><sup>91</sup>: Who or what do you expect to save you? <i>Crash</i> explores intersecting lives that rely on everything to save them except the God of Scriptures. This film allows learners to consider how our pseudo-saviors fail us, and to explore how trusting God fully could affect their lives.</p>
<p><b>2: Honor Name: <i>Spirited Away</i></b><sup>92</sup>: What power do names have? How do we honor another with names? Identity and being used for others, set against the temptations around her, are the keys that release the heroine of this Japanese animated tale, and those she affects, from their bondage. This film helps learners explore who defines them, and how God desires us both to honor the power of God's name and to allow God to define us and liberate us by pouring us out for others.</p>
<p><b>3: Honor Day Of Re-Creation: <i>The Santa Clause</i></b><sup>93</sup> Explores the power of recreation and faith through the paradox of a secular Christmas tale. The donning of clothes ontologically changes a dad into Santa Claus, and he only comes to believe his transformation through his young son's pure faith. This change gifts him entrance into a new community and changes him to live for others, not himself. Learners explore the power of words to create and recreate before understanding and trust exist, but only through consistent proclamation.</p>
<p><b>4: Honor Authority: <i>The Joy Luck Club</i></b><sup>94</sup>: How do we honor parents and authorities? Flashbacks over two generations explore the circularity of history for four Chinese-American women and their mothers, all friends. Each woman comes to understand her mother's role as authority only by learning of her role as daughter and wife/concubine, and the life lessons she lived from both honoring or dishonoring authority. This film enables learners to explore what honoring authority means to them, and to God.</p>
<p><b>5: Honor Life: <i>Insomnia</i></b><sup>95</sup>: The incessant light of the law shining into the darkness of our souls. An LA cop tries to hide his past, and a current shooting, while solving another murder and fighting insomnia in the 24/7 summer light of Nightmute, Alaska. This film looks at how we cannot hide from our sins. Learners explore God's promise that rest can only come through the death of our old self: by relinquishing control, acknowledging our sins, trusting authority and placing other lives ahead of our own.</p>

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<sup>91</sup> *Crash*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Paul Haggis (2004; Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Entertainment, 2005).

<sup>92</sup> *Spirited Away*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Hayao Mayazaki (2001; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003).

<sup>93</sup> *The Santa Clause*, widescreen special edition, DVD, Directed by John Pasquin (1994; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2002).

<sup>94</sup> *The Joy Luck Club*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Wayne Wang (1993; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000).

<sup>95</sup> *Insomnia*, widescreen ed, DVD, Directed by Christopher Nolan (2002; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2002).

COMMANDMENT: THEME: FILM: CORRELATION
<p><b>6: Honor Marital Relationships: <i>Moonstruck</i></b><sup>96</sup>: How do we honor spouse and love? The pending marriage of a widowed Italian woman is the basis for exploring fidelity within three generations of spouses and children of two families. How does one deal with temptation with another when you feel ignored, or uninspired, by your spouse or intended. Who does define your moral compass?</p>
<p><b>7: Honor Ownership of Property: <i>Key Largo</i></b><sup>97</sup>: Theft versus the protection of property, lives and reputations is focus of this classic Bogart – Bacall - E.G. Robinson –Lionel Barrymore movie. The intrusion of an infamous gangster into a small inn on Key Largo during a hurricane contrasts destruction by humanity with that by nature. Courage, cowardice, and control are means of exploring how all commandments relate back to the first – from where do you get the strength to confront situations you cannot control.</p>
<p><b>8: Honor Reputations: <i>Good Night, and Good Luck</i></b><sup>98</sup>: This movie chronicles Edward R. Murrow’s successful televised attack on Senator McCarthy of Wisconsin, who destroyed lives through paranoia, rumor and innuendo.</p>
<p><b>9 &amp; 10: Guard Your Desires: <i>All About Eve</i></b><sup>99</sup>: What is the effect of unguarded desire combined with envy for what others have? What more needs to be said about this movie? Every form of coveting is explored in this classic Bette Davis film, summed up in her famous line: “Fasten your seatbelts; it’s going to be a bumpy night!”<sup>100</sup></p>

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<sup>96</sup> *Moonstruck*, DVD, Directed by Norman Jewison (1987; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 1998).

<sup>97</sup> *Key Largo*, Keep case ed, DVD, Directed by John Houston (1948; Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2000).

<sup>98</sup> *Good Night, and Good Luck*, widescreen ed, DVD, Directed by George Clooney (2005; Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> *All About Eve*, DVD, Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950; Beverly Hills, CA: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Scene 11 Bill’s Homecoming and Birthday Party.

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*Key Largo*, Keep case ed. DVD. Directed by John Houston. 1948; Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2000.

*Moonstruck*, DVD. Directed by Norman Jewison. 1987; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 1998.

*The Santa Clause*, widescreen special ed. DVD. Directed by John Pasquin. 1994; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2002.

*Spirited Away*, widescreen ed. DVD. Directed by Hayao Mayazaki. 2001; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003.



Luther's Explanation to the Decalogue

As Explored through Film:

A Curriculum for Young Adults

by

Karen A. Wilson

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b><i>BC</i></b>	<i>Book of Concord.</i> Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis, 2000.
<b><i>ELW</i></b>	<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i>
<b><i>LC</i></b>	<i>Luther's Large Catechism.</i>
<b><i>LW-CD</i></b>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , English Edition, CD-Rom.
<b><i>NRSV</i></b>	<i>New Revised Standard Version.</i> Source of all biblical quotations, unless indicated.
<b><i>SC</i></b>	<i>Luther's Small Catechism</i>

## **Luther's Explanation to the Decalogue**

### **As Explored through Film:**

### **A Curriculum for Young Adults**

#### **Introduction**

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? Why do different people in different countries with different histories know that killing, stealing, and dishonoring elders and authorities are wrong? Moreover, if we all know what is right and wrong, why is the world such a mess and what can *we* do about it? This curriculum examines these questions by exploring the Ten Commandments through Martin Luther's explanations in his Large Catechism, and by utilizing film to illuminate the commandment's insight into who we are as humans.

The curriculum is split into eleven lessons. Lesson 1 delves into what the commandments are, who Martin Luther was, and what he had to say. Lessons 2 through 10 consider each commandment individually. Lesson 11 wraps up the commandments collectively, affording time to reflect on the lessons as a whole.

The following lesson material per session includes a discussion of Luther's explanation, a film choice, and discussion questions. Each session ends with proposed activities for self-reflection. Two appendixes follow providing suggested guidelines for creating the study group, and a potential timeline for each lesson's activities.

## The Ten Commandments via Luther and Film

*In a simple way in which the head of a house is to present them to the household<sup>1</sup>*

### Lesson One: All Law Comes From God

On October 31, 1517, a young German monk and university professor named Martin Luther requested a theological debate with his superiors and peers on the church's view (and, therefore, society's) on what God's Law required of humans, what the Law consisted of, and what happened if they chose to ignore it and God. He used an accepted method to communicate such a request by hammering questions to the massive wooden doors of the Wittenberg Church. As his superiors refused the debate and attempted to silence him with their preferred methods – excommunication and death – Luther's friends who owned a printing press effectively mass-mailed Luther's works throughout the land. Akin to when our own emails and blogs on controversial subjects acquire a life of their own, Luther's words lit an unexpected firestorm, ultimately changing Western Civilization and creating the world we know today. That was *some* hammering.

Luther was first alarmed, and then incensed, over church laws he either could not find in Scripture, or saw as twisted by the church to promote its officials and professions at the expense of common people – from peasant to prince. As Luther studied Scripture, translating original Greek and Hebrew texts into German, he realized God's Law taught

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<sup>1</sup> See SC Footnote 24, in BC 351. This is Luther's title to the Ten Commandments section from the 1529 broadsheets, retained in subsequent editions.

not only God's love for and interaction with humanity, but also to what extent humans were incapable of following God's Law and how God overcame this hurdle. His new understanding of who God was, and the relationship God desired with humans, set teeth on edge and lit the match. That was *some* breakthrough, and that remains *some* Law.

### What Is God's Law, and Why Study It?

What is sin? In fact, who are we as humans, why do we exist, and why do we exist with something called a conscience...and why does it know to value choices as either "good" or "bad"? Sin – what it is and what it entails – is the apex around which our view of God, our view of each other, and therefore our view of ourselves revolve.

Humanity has wrestled with these questions for as long as there was a fire to muse around. The variety of its answers gave rise to religion, defining the various perceptions of how humanity, the earth, the cosmos, the past, and the future are connected. A tribe of people in the Fertile Crescent desert we know today as Iraq realized existence had reason because humanity had a creator who loved people intensely, and created them for a mutual relationship – a creator unlike any other. The people became known as the nation of Israel and humanity's creator as Yahweh, the Lord, God. The Israelites compiled the history of God's shared relationship with them into the Hebrew Scriptures, which became the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.

Humanity's understanding of what is good and bad comes from knowing the law,<sup>2</sup> and the law came to all people from God.<sup>3</sup> The Old Testament first summarized this law into the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, as God's framework for human relationship with God and with other humans. God accomplishes justice and mercy within our world by teaching us how we destroy each other when we place our perceived needs before God and others. From hard lessons learned, humanity crafted its social laws.

The Decalogue gives rules for both categories of human relationships: the first three laws relate to its interactions with God; the final seven relate to interactions with others. The second set undergirds laws across cultures and across time: honor your elders and authority and keep your hands off other people and their things. History, of course, teaches we find ingenious ways to rationalize our way out of following our own rules. The tenets of our relationship with God are not encoded within *our* nation's laws, though belief in God did undergird the minds of our nation's founders.

Lastly, Scripture presents God's Law as categorical – that is, it is given authoritatively, and not as proposed legislation to follow only if and when it suits us. There are consequences to breaking God's Law, namely death and separation from God. This lesson is found throughout Scripture: from Adam and Eve to Jonah, from the nation of Israel to the story of Saul, the lesson is the same. God works hard to get our attention

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<sup>2</sup> In the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Paul of Tarsus wrote in his letter to the Christian church in Rome (Romans 7:7), "Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet.""

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3 attributes our knowledge of the law to Adam and Eve disregarding God and eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (not your everyday garden tree). Afterwards, "[their eyes] were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. [They then hid from God who came looking for them. God asked], "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (3:7, 11)

when we decide God and God's law are not for us, and finally allows sin's naturally occurring calamities, bringing separation and even death, to get our attention.

### Why Study the Commandments?

“This much is certain: those who know the Ten Commandments perfectly know the entire Scriptures and in all affairs and circumstances are able to counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. They are qualified to be a judge over all doctrines, walks of life, spirits, legal matters, and everything else in the world.”<sup>4</sup> By understanding that the Decalogue contained the basis for all human law, and defined God's expectation for our relationships, Luther understood the imperative that everyone – from church leaders and princes, to parents, children, and servants – first learn, memorize and comprehend what God expected from them, so they could start to understand the magnitude of God's love for humanity Scripture revealed. Accordingly, Luther wrote two catechisms to help all people – in every walk of life and level of education – begin to learn who the God of Scripture was.

His Small Catechism, first published in 1529 as broadsheets that hung on walls like a poster, was used to daily teach the core of scriptures in a formulated sequence from God's Law to God's Gospel: The Decalogue (God's Law), The Apostle's Creed (the core Christian beliefs), The Lord's Prayer (how to pray to God), The Sacraments of Baptism and Communion (how God comes to us), The Office of the Keys (our calling to forgive each other), Confession and Absolution (how we repent our own sins to God),

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<sup>4</sup> *LC* Pref. 17 (1530), in *BC*, 382.

and ending Prayers for morning, mealtimes and bedtime (keeping God first in our hearts and God's name on our lips throughout the day.) Key to his Small Catechism is the phrase: "What Does This Mean?" following each piece of text. Here Luther paraphrases the text into language easy to understand and memorize. For the Ten Commandments Luther explains them first as negative "Do Not's." He then recasts them as positive "Do's", teaching how God calls us to bring life to others, and implementing Christ's words from Matthew: God' Law encompasses every thought, word, and deed (5:21-48) of our relationship with God and with others (22:37-40). Finally, Luther wrote the Large Catechism for an in-depth study of these same lessons. Like the Small, the Large both applied the texts to everyday life, and pointed the learner to delve deeper into Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

### **Group Discussion and Reflection**

1. Human laws rarely stay static. If law came from God, why do humans change laws? When should we change a law? What does this say about God's Law?
2. Think of examples where laws have changed: Why was the law changed? Who decided the law should change? Who *should* decide a law must change?
3. What laws should *not* change? When do laws depend on the situation, and when are laws "carved in stone"? Who decides which are which?

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<sup>5</sup> An introductory lesson to the commandments can only touch on Luther's works, their importance to our understanding about ourselves, and how and why we relate to each other and to God. For further reading a good place to start is with Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, two of his treatises from 1520: *Freedom of a Christian* (LW 31) and *To The Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (LW 44), and his larger work from 1545 arguing humanity's bondage to sin: *The Bondage of the Will* (LW 33).



4. Luther insisted theology must be grounded in Scripture. Must American laws be grounded in Scripture? Why or why not? If yes, which laws should, and which laws should not? What is your basis for the distinction?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How do *you* relate to God's commandments? Which are easy to keep, and which ones do you ignore? Why? What consequence(s) do you expect? How would you live differently if you viewed every commandment as binding and the consequences as imminent?
2. This week notice and note down when others change a law to suit themselves. Notice when you do the same. What was *your* rationale? What might be your core reason(s) for placing yourself outside of laws?
3. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection of your choice on law: what the law means to you and gives you, positively and/or negatively, and what you think they mean and give to others.

## **Lesson Two: We All Have A God**

The 1<sup>ST</sup> Commandment: You Are to Have No Other Gods<sup>6</sup>

*What is this? Answer:* "We are to fear, love and trust God above all things."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> LC 1, 1, in BC 386-392.

<sup>7</sup> Each commandment is listed first with its title, and then followed by Luther's Small Catechism explanations found in BC, 351-354

What is a god and what does it matter? “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21). Luther also understood we all have a god, even if we claim to be atheistic. A god is who or what we ultimately depend on to give us life’s benefits, and to protect us when life is falling apart. “Therefore,” Luther wrote, “to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.”<sup>8</sup>

In America self-sufficiency is the motto for some – don’t lean on anyone, work hard without help and you will be rewarded, by God and/or by humanity – while entitlement is the motto for others – you (God and/or humanity) owe me, and I deserve, therefore give it to me. Luther saw the same situation around him. Commercialism was rising as merchants scammed prince and peasant alike with shoddy goods and business practices. The church was there to make a buck as you earned salvation. Princes abused peasants by overworking them for little pay; peasants abused princes through theft, vandalism, and idleness. Everyone looked after Number One; few looked to God to provide and protect them. Lack of prestige, money, and honor was deemed intolerable as life revolved around accumulating wealth – by church, state, and citizen alike. But, Luther asked, what’s so great about wealth? At death, the wealthy lose it all and their bodies still turn to dust.<sup>9</sup>

Who is your god? What do you spend your time on to feel secure in life? Is it material wealth, prestige, a better body, perfect environment, or a social cause? Is your life focused on others’ possessions, believing resources are scarce and you need your share at all costs to survive? Do you rely on today’s understanding to save the world, or to save

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<sup>8</sup> *LC* 1, 1:3, in *BC*, 386.

<sup>9</sup> *LC* 1, 1:42-43, in *BC*, 391.

humanity? Do you proclaim others as abusive, destroyers of life, and feel your choices make you superior?

Luther confessed God as revealed in Scripture: the God who created all and provided all – life, sustenance, protection – was whom Luther relied on for all protection, through death threats and severe illnesses, when his child died, when peasants rioted, and when friends and associates abandoned him, Luther confessed it was God alone who sustained him. “[All] this [God has done] out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.”<sup>10</sup>

Film: *Crash* (2004)<sup>11</sup>

*Crash* explores how humans view themselves in relation to those around them. While the media attention on this film focused on racism, the film raises more subtle and powerful questions: In whom or in what do we give authority to protect us in times of danger? Who or what sustains life, protection, and safety, and at what cost? What happens when what we have defined as our protective layers fail us, and when the freedom we proclaim to another – a mother, brother, immigrant – causes their ruin?

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<sup>10</sup> SC, “The Creed,” 2, in *BC*, 355.

<sup>11</sup> *Crash*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Paul Haggis (2004; Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Entertainment, 2005). Run time: ~112 minutes. Rated: R for language, sexual content, and some violence.

### **Group Discussion and Reflection**

1. What are the various gods in our world today? What is most important to people to do, think, or be, and how is the list prioritized? What do people rely on to give them protection, safety, life, sustenance, recreation (a.k.a. re-creation)?
2. How are these gods disposed to us: what do they do for us, and what promises do they give that we rely can on? How do they protect us when we fear our future?
3. What power do you have to determine your life, job, reputation, or country? What powers do others have? What happens when the two collide?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. Using the three group discussions, answer them personally. What would you do (or have you done) if or when your life's bedrock is threatened...or even disappears completely? How would you cope; how did you? Or, did you?
2. If you could trust the God of Scriptures, perfectly and implicitly, to provide all of life for you, how would your life change? Can you trust? Why and/or why not?
3. This week notice and note down the various gods you glean from people's words and actions. Who or what appears to be driving them? Can you tell if this is their real God? Does anyone know who your real God is? Why or why not?
4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on your relationship with your gods: Who or what are your gods? What do they think about you and do for you?

### **Lesson Three: God's Name Is Powerful**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment: Do Not Misuse the Name of Your God

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie or deceive using God’s name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise and give thanks to God.”

“Just as the First Commandment instructs the heart and teaches faith, so this commandment leads us outward and directs the lips and tongue into a right relationship with God. For the first things that burst forth and emerge from the heart are words.”<sup>12</sup>

God’s name was so feared in the Old Testament no one could speak or write it; they used Yahweh as a screen name instead. In the Garden of Eden, once Adam and Eve no longer trusted God’s word, they hid when they heard God’s voice.<sup>13</sup> God’s voice exposed their real selves; God-proclaimed exposes our shame at the nakedness of our human sin.

Luther understood God’s name carried power. Misusing God’s name meant more than spewing an offhand curse; it included both using God’s name and God’s perfection to hide our sins behind,<sup>14</sup> and also dismissing them and God’s Word as pure fable in order to justify trusting ourselves first and only.<sup>15</sup> “By nature we all have this lovely

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<sup>12</sup> LC 1, 2:50, in BC, 392.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 3:

<sup>14</sup> LC 1, 2:52,56, in BC, 393.

<sup>15</sup> LC 1, 2:55, in BC, 393.

virtue that whenever we commit a wrong we like to cover it and gloss over our disgrace so that no one may see or know it... We prefer to act in secret...”<sup>16</sup>

God’s name held immense power, however, when claimed rightly, when we “call on [God] in time of need, or thank and praise [God] in time of prosperity...[as] summarized in...Psalm 50[:15]: “Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”<sup>17</sup> Luther reiterates: “...[First] the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession.”<sup>18</sup> Today, we crave others to be honest, real, true, and authentic with us. God craves the same from us. God calls us to use God’s name, not as a toy or an off-color remark, but in prayer with God expressing honor, needs, love, trust, and thanksgiving, and in proclamation to others so that God can create life where none exists.

Film: *Spirited Away* (2001)<sup>19</sup>

What power do names have? How do we honor or destroy each other through the use or misuse of names? Whom do we allow to define our identity? In the Japanese animated fantasy, *Spirited Away*, identity and servanthood become key for a young girl to affect life for herself, her family, and the community surrounding her.

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<sup>16</sup> LC 1, 2:59, in BC, 393-394.

<sup>17</sup> LC 1, 2:64, in BC, 394.

<sup>18</sup> LC 1, 2:70, in BC, 395.

<sup>19</sup> *Spirited Away*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Hayao Mayazaki (2001; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003). Run time: ~125 minutes. Rated: PG.

### Group Discussion and Reflection

1. How did identity and relationships with others change Chihiro and those around her? Who defined Chihiro's various identities and what affect did they have on her and others? Who or what defines our identity? How is that related to who our god is and how does it affect how we see and interact with others?
2. How do we use names to hold power over others, beneficially and abusively? Where do kids learn their painful art, and how do adults continue the pattern? How does the way in which we interact with another affect and/or define us? What are the effects and/or reactions when names are used wrongly? Why?
3. How is God's name used today? How does that affect people around us? How can God's name be hallowed within our society? Is it possible? How is God affected?

### Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week

1. Who or what defines *your* identity? How is that related to who *your* god is, and how does it affect how you see and interact with others?
2. How does God interact with you, name you, and/or define you? What effect does this have on your life? How do you interact with, name, and/or define God? What effect does that have on God?
3. How do *you* personally use names to hold power over others, beneficially and abusively? How does the way in which *you* interact with another affect and/or define you? How does the view you hold of yourself match or differ with the view others tell you of yourself? If there is a difference, why?

4. This week, notice and note down how others use names, and how the other person appears affected by the names they chose. What names were used for you this week, and how did they affect you? How do you name and define God? What would change if your use of God's name, and the identity you give God, changed?
5. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection of your name. Who named you and who or what now defines you?

### **Lesson Four: God's Word Creates Life & Faith**

#### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment: Hallow the Day of Rest**

*What is this? Answer:* "We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's Word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it."

"The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath."

(Mark 2:27) Jesus shocked the religious folk around him by plucking grain, eating, and healing on the Sabbath, teaching them they misunderstood the day God set aside for rest. It was not intended as a day to be worshiped, but a day to be kept holy for re-creation. Luther explores this further: " Our word "holy day" or "holiday" is so called from the Hebrew word "Sabbath," which properly means to rest, that is, to cease from work; hence our common expression for "stopping work" literally means "taking a holiday." In the Old Testament, God set apart the seventh day, appointed it for rest, and commanded it to be kept holy above all other days."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> LC 1, 3:79-80, in BC, 396-397.



How does this day become holy? Luther writes, “Nothing else than devoting it to holy words, holy works, and holy living. The day itself does not need to be made holy, for it was created holy. But God wants it to be holy for you. So it becomes holy...when we make use of God’s word and exercise ourselves in it.”<sup>21</sup> And further, “At whatever time God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints.”<sup>22</sup> God created the world and all of creation out of chaos using verbal words. God’s Word creates from nothing and God’s Word re-creates when we hear it verbally proclaimed. As Paul writes in Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”

Luther, however, understood that hearing words was not enough, “[The] commandment ... is also violated by [those] who listen to God’s Word as they would to any other entertainment, who only from force of habit go to hear the sermon and leave again with as little knowledge at the end of the year as at the beginning...[You] must be concerned not only about hearing the Word, but also about learning it and retaining it.”<sup>23</sup> He wrote further: “Where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It

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<sup>21</sup> *LC 1, 3:87-88, in BC, 398.*

<sup>22</sup> *LC 1, 3:92, in BC, 399.*

<sup>23</sup> *LC 1, 3:96,98, in BC, 399-400.*

always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devotion, and it constantly creates clean hearts and minds. For this Word is not idle or dead, but effective and living.”<sup>24</sup>

Film: *The Santa Clause* (1994)<sup>25</sup>

What power do words have to create and recreate? Scott Calvin is a divorced man with his young son on Christmas Eve, whose life changes without his understanding or consent by simply donning a Santa suit at his son’s insistence. Understanding comes through a child’s faith; the unexpected change brings new life, and new eyes to life.

### **Group Discussion and Reflection**

1. In what ways did Scott change, and what caused the various changes? How were the various changes different and/or the same? Which of the changes, if any, were from verbal words, and which, if any, were not? What choices did Scott have with each change?
2. Was Scott’s change partial or full? How did Scott’s change involve death, and how did it involve life? What was Scott’s reaction to change? How did his reaction itself change over time, and why?

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<sup>24</sup> *LC* 1, 3:100, in *BC*, 400.

<sup>25</sup> *The Santa Clause*, widescreen special edition, DVD, Directed by John Pasquin (1994; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2002). Run time: ~97 Minutes. Rated: G.

3. Roman 10:17 says faith comes from hearing the Word. Luther wrote the heart was idle without God's verbal Word allowing the devil to do damage. What damage does the devil do when the Word is not heard? What is "hearing the Word"?  
Based on Luther and Paul, do people decide to follow God or have faith?
4. How is hearing God's Word akin to Scott reading the card? How is it different?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How does God recreate *you*? Does God recreate you?
2. From Group Question #3, if faith is God's gift of creation out of sin's chaos, what would hearing God's Word verbalized do to your life? Is it worth the risk? Why or why not? How does this relate to who your God is?
3. This week, notice and note down what recharges you, recreates you. What is being actually being recreated and how long does it last? If God recreated you when would it end? Has God recreated you? Do you trust that God has done so?
4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection of creation and recreation. What is recreation and re-creation to you, and how does it, or does it not involve God?

### **Lesson Five: God Keeps Us Safe through Authority**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Honor Your Father and Your Mother

*What is this? Answer:* "We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority but instead honor, serve, obey, love and respect them."

Luther wrote that God gave special honor to the vocation of parenthood, placing it above all other vocations and next to God's own self. We are to show them love, deference, humility, and modesty; "[we are to] address them "affectionately and with high esteem, but above all to show by our actions, both of heart and body, that we respect them very highly, and that next to God we give them the very highest place...[Revere them] as God's representatives, [remembering] that, however lowly, poor, feeble, and eccentric they may be, they are still...[our] mother and father, given by God. They are not to be deprived by their ways or failings."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Luther teaches Scripture places all forms of authority under this same umbrella: masters, teachers, bosses, officials, are due the same high honor and respect, "For all other authority is derived and developed out of the authority of parents."<sup>27</sup>

Humanity has twisted this commandment and caused considerable damage. All forms of authority, what Luther terms "fathers by blood, fathers of a household, fathers of the nation,"<sup>28</sup> have used their expected due to subjugate and abuse those under them, and the commandment provides us no out for relationships we dislike. Here we can see our sinfulness. We follow commandments when the other person makes it easy for us; however, when others do not "keep up their end of the relationship" we treat the commandments as though they are proposals, validated only when both sides fulfill the

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<sup>26</sup> *LC* 1, 4:105, 107-108, in *BC*, 400-401.

<sup>27</sup> *LC* 1, 4:141, in *BC*, 405.

<sup>28</sup> *LC* 1, 4:158, in *BC*, 408.

agreement. God holds both sides, however, to God's standard; neither side is released from their duties when the other side fails.

Luther, categorically stated commandments were not licenses to abuse or destroy. Authority was delegated as a vocation from God, who demands justice, mercy, provision for, and fair treatment towards, all under authority. Luther also saw this was counter-culture: "...no one perceives or pays attention to this. Everyone acts as if God gave us children for our pleasure and amusement, gave us servants merely to put them to work like cows or donkeys, and gave us subjects to treat as we please, as if it were not concern of ours what they learn or how they live...[If] we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and the spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world." For Luther, society's ills resulted from children and parents gone wild, both being raised without regard to God or God's call to serve each other through love and honor authority.

"Why do you think the world is now so full of unfaithfulness, shame, misery, and murder? It is because all want to be their own lords, to be free of all authority, to care nothing for anyone, and do whatever they please. So God punishes one scoundrel by means of another, so that when you defraud or despise your lord, another person comes along and treats you likewise... We certainly feel our misfortune, and we grumble and complain about unfaithfulness, violence, and injustice. But we are unwilling to see that we ourselves are scoundrels who have rightly deserved punishment and are in no way better because of it. We spurn grace and blessing;

therefore it is only fair that we have nothing but misfortune without any mercy”<sup>29</sup>

Per Luther, if you want to reduce social ills, then raise children and expect adults, yourself included, to honor God, honor authority, honor each other and honor creation.

Film: *The Joy Luck Club* (1993)<sup>30</sup>

How *do* we honor parents and authorities? Through flashbacks over two generations *The Joy Luck Club* explores the circularity of history for four Chinese mothers, now close friends in America, and their American daughters. Each woman only comes to understand her mother as parent by learning of her often-painful role as daughter, wife/concubine, lover, learning lessons from honoring/dishonoring authority.

### **Group Discussion and Reflection**

1. Which story affected you the most, and why? Was it of a daughter or a mother or a grandmother – or of a husband or boyfriend/lover or of authority? Which generation’s actions did you find easiest to accept? How did generation and culture affect your views on the choices each woman and man made?

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<sup>29</sup> *LC* 1, 4:154-155, in *BC*, 407-408.

<sup>30</sup> *The Joy Luck Club*, widescreen edition, DVD, Directed by Wayne Wang (1993; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000). Run time: ~139 minutes. Rated: R for strong depiction of thematic material.

2. Attempting to place your 21<sup>st</sup> century American self in the shoes of other generations and cultures, explain the various ways people tried to provide safety for themselves, their children and/or others? When were the needs in conflict, why, and which need won out?
3. How was authority misused? How was it used properly? How was it honored, and how was it dishonored? What does it say about God giving law and delegating authority to humans?
4. In the *The Joy Luck Club*, Scene 9 “I See You”, Suyan says to June, “I *see* you” which brings healing to her daughter. How does God see us, and what does God see? How does our need to be seen and understood before trusting relate to sin and the law?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How does God see *you*? What does God see and understand? What do you require God to see and understand about you? What if God’s answer is “I do see you, but I need you to “see” my law and your sin?”
2. Who in your life needs *you* to see *them*: to hear you understand who they are, you love them in spite of what they have done, and you forgive them? Who are you unable to see? Reflect on how you feel about their need, and why they still wait.
3. This week, notice and note down the various authorities you encounter and your reaction to them. When did you grant another the authority over you, when did you not, and why? In each case, how was the authority trying to protect you?

4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on authority's role in your life: whom do you allow to have it and whom do you not. To what degree do you give God authority, and to what degree do you not? How does this relate to who your god is?

### **Lesson Six: Protect All Life – *Especially* Your Enemy's**

#### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not Kill**

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.”

The first four commandments relate to those in authority, both divine and human; the remaining commandments relate to our interactions with our neighbor. Luther, therefore, categorically stated that God's commandment not to kill relates to neither God nor authorities, nor abolishes their right to provide defense or punishment in their official roles, or even to be angry. “Anger, reproof and punishment are the prerogatives of God and his representatives and are to be meted out to those who transgress this and the other commandments.”<sup>31</sup>

Luther saw envy for what other people bred a cycle of greed, hatred and violence, often resulting in bloodshed and murder, all for the lust for things and fueled by a demand (stated or unstated) that God allocate all things equally. Luther did not find God making such a promise in scripture; instead, Luther found God requiring people to share

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<sup>31</sup> *LC* 1, 5:182, in *BC*, 411.



with others the blessings God *did* give to *them*, regardless of quantity, and to end their violence, envy, and greed. God and God's delegated authorities, not individual understanding or force, were to be called on for justice when others took for themselves.

“Therefore, God wishes to remove the root and source that embitters our heart toward our neighbor. He wants to train us to hold this commandment always before our eyes as a mirror in which to see ourselves, so that we may be attentive to his will and, with heartfelt confidence and prayer in his name, commit whatever wrong we suffer to God. Then we can let our enemies rave and rage and do their worst. Thus we may learn to calm our anger and have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, namely, our enemies.”<sup>32</sup>

Luther being Luther, though, relied on Scripture to expand “killing” past taking a life;<sup>33</sup> Scripture also included harming by “hand or deed”, advocating and/or sanctioning harm to another, and our very thoughts of harm towards another. “Thus you should be blameless in body and soul toward all people, but especially toward anyone who wishes or does you evil.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Luther switched the focus from directly harming your enemies to indirectly harming by allowing people to suffer when you could prevent it. Christ warned of judgment for all who did not feed, clothe, and comfort those in need.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *LC* 1, 5:186, in *BC*, 411.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 5:21-26?

<sup>34</sup> *LC* 1, 5:188, in *BC*, 412.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 25:31-46

Luther warned against ignoring those we knew needed our help, who we allowed to suffer and die by our indifference.

God wants our concern to be for the welfare of all people, *especially* those we cannot stand. Caring for friends is easy since it feeds the friendship; how we love, help, care for enemies – social or political – exposes our true god. “Once again we have God’s Word by which he wants to encourage and urge us to true, noble, exalted deeds, such as gentleness, patience, and, in short, love and kindness toward our enemies. He always wants to remind us to recall the First Commandment, that he is our God; that is, that he wishes to help, comfort, and protect us, so that he may restrain our desire for revenge.”<sup>36</sup>

Film: *Insomnia* (2002)<sup>37</sup>

“Invited to Nightmute, Alaska, to head a murder case, veteran LAPD detective Will Dormer finds his investigation disrupted by an ever-shining midnight sun that wreaks sleep-depriving havoc on him – and by personal guilt over a second crime that may be real...or a figment of his increasingly unstable consciousness.”<sup>38</sup>

## Group Discussion and Reflection

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<sup>36</sup> *LC* 1, 5:195, in *BC*, 413.

<sup>37</sup> *Insomnia*, widescreen ed, DVD, Directed by Christopher Nolan (2002; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2002). Run time: ~118 minutes. Rated: R for language, some violence, and brief nudity.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, DVD case notes.

1. What were Dormer's crimes? Do their details matter? Who were Dormer's enemies and who were his friends, and why? When did their category change?
2. How did Dormer take, bring, and restore life to friends and enemies alike? Who or what restored Dormer's life? What parallels do you see to God and our lives?
3. What was the midnight sunlight for Dormer? How does the incessant light in this movie parallel God using God's law to illuminate our true selves? How do Dormer's attempts to escape the light mirror our attempts to escape God?
4. What is revenge, and why do we all seek it? How do we seek it in covert ways that do not necessarily take a life...or do they? How does this relate to ignoring people in need, or does it?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How have people taken revenge on you in the past? What was or were the issue(s) and what was at stake? How did you handle it? How did you feel, then and now?
2. How do *you* take revenge, and what means do you use? How do you rationalize your need to take action? What would happen if you told the problem to God and then trusted and/or assumed God would deal with it on God's terms?
3. This week, notice and note down the ways you and others manage to seek revenge. What was the problem? What damage could you see from the problem and from the revenge? Could you see a different solution? What would have happened if you had stepped into the middle? Where is your line for helping or ignoring people who are in need? Why? How does this relate to who your god is?

4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on revenge – the different ways that we all take revenge on each other, and how that relates to who our god is.

### **Lesson Seven: Spouse and Families: Optional or Necessary?**

#### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery**

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.”

As a former monk, Luther took a vow of celibacy but witnessed rampant abuse of others’ vows throughout the Roman priests, monks, and papacy, and society-at-large. Once again, Luther’s explanation encompassed not only thought, word and deed of unchastity, but also defending your neighbor from losing their honor – either through their own deeds or through another’s. “...[You] are to defend, protect, and rescue your neighbors whenever they are in danger or need, and moreover, even aid and assist them so that they may retain their honor. Whenever you fail to do this (although you could prevent a wrong) or do not even lift a finger (as if it were none of your business), you are just as guilty as the culprit who commits the act. In short, all are required both to live chastely themselves and also to help their neighbors to do the same.”<sup>39</sup>

Along with retaining virtue, Luther understood this commandment combined with the fourth – honor your parents – to place the creation and sustaining of families as the highest vocation God could give to people. “[God] has established [marriage] before all

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<sup>39</sup> LC 1, 6:203-205, in BC, 414.

[other walks of life] as the first of all institutions, and he created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture and bring them up to the glory of God.”<sup>40</sup>

Today, however, families are viewed as an option, not God’s gift of high vocation, and may or may not include a parent staying home. Starting in the late 1960’s, adults in Western countries ran far away from chastity, marriage, and children in search of freedom. Society’s pendulum has swung back to where all three are accepted options, but not necessarily required or expected. The messages exhorting individual freedom over communal commitment are taught through the media and various cultures. Families themselves are undervalued still when one considers whether one parent even can afford to stay home and raise their children, and we no longer notice the high number of single parents who can only work and pay others to raise their children. Two wage earners in a household also enables better purchases: better house, better cars, more after school activities, destination vacations, better clothes, better schools, and intellectual pursuits for all. Society has shifted to where consuming things and ideas supercedes honoring families – spouses, children, and parents – as an image of God, wherein commitments and spouse are honored, and where children are protected, provided for, and loved, allowing relationships and life to flourish. Have we progressed or recessed?

Film: *Moonstruck* (1987)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *LC* 1, 6:207, in *BC*, 414.

How do we honor spouse, love, and relationships? The pending marriage of a widowed Italian-American woman is the basis for exploring fidelity within three generations of spouses and children from two families. How does one deal with the temptation of another when you feel ignored or uninspired by your spouse or intended?

### **Group Discussion And Reflection**

1. *Moonstruck* looks at the boundaries and interactions of relationships between all forms of loved ones, from both the male-female perspectives, intergenerationally and cross-culturally. Which relationships affected you the most and the least, either positively or negatively, and why?
2. How was morality portrayed the same, and how was it portrayed as changed, between the generations and the cultures?
3. Does love matter in a relationship? Does desire? What happens when they no longer exist, or never have? Are they required? What does this commandment say about love and desire, commitment and choice? About desire between people of the same sex?
4. Why do we have a gender, and how does original design relate to the ability, requirement, or desire to use it? How do people use their sexual bodies, and why? How does these relate to the first commandment? How do we honor God with our

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<sup>41</sup> *Moonstruck*, DVD, Directed by Norman Jewison (1987; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 1998). Run time: ~102 minutes. Rated: PG.

sexual bodies and libidos? How does God call us to interact with people who think differently, and who may or may not appreciate our interaction?

5. What did the moon symbolize? How does the moon have any parallel within God? How does it not? What is the moon in your life?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How are marriage, family, and sex portrayed in this movie? How are they important to each character? To you? Can or could you be happy without one or all of them? Why or why not? How does your answer relate to who is your god?
2. This week, notice and note down the ways people honor and dishonor families. Can you glean from their context the reasons? Could you see other solutions? What would happen if you intervened? What could you do? Should you?
3. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on your most committed relationship with another human being, what it brings to each of you, and how each of you feed, nurture and neglect it. What will happen when it ends? Compare it to God's committed relationship with you. Does it exist? Can you trust it? How long will it last? What would sever God's relationship with you?

### **Lesson Eight: Stop! Thief!**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not Steal

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbor’s money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.”

As with the other commandments, Luther expands the definition of stealing to encompass “everything that has to do with our neighbor.” We are not to injure our neighbors in any way, “whether by damaging, withholding, or interfering with their possessions and property. We are not even to consent to or permit such a thing but are rather to avert and prevent it. In addition, we are commanded to promote and further our neighbor’s interests, and when they suffer any want, we are to help, share, and lend to both friend and foe.”<sup>42</sup> Luther understood God applied this commandment not only to covert thieves, but also to those who “steal and rob openly” in the marketplace through shoddy business practices, who “are safe and free, unpunished by anyone, even desired to be honored.”<sup>43</sup> It also applied to employees who stole from their employers by willful or careless waste, or by not preventing damage when they could.<sup>44</sup>

Modern day examples are all too easy. From substandard business practices to employees surfing the net on company time; from kids ditching school – losing the state funding – to parents fudging time cards and sick time. Humans can justify any behavior that betters themselves at the expense of another.

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<sup>42</sup> *LC 1, 7:251, in BC, 419.*

<sup>43</sup> *LC 1, 7:231, in BC, 417.*

<sup>44</sup> *LC 1, 7:225, in BC, 416.*



Luther reiterated God’s warning that, whether directly or by others, whether now or later, punishment would overflow for those who abused others, including by careless and seemingly minor theft, and for those who ignore theft and bad practices around them, especially those paid to create and/or protect the property of others.<sup>45</sup> The quantity and method was unimportant, the mindset was critical.

#### Film: *Key Largo* (1948)<sup>46</sup>

A notorious gangster commandeers a small inn on Key Largo during a hurricane, contrasting human control of property, lives, and self-esteem with uncontrollable Nature, both placing lives, home, honor, courage, means of existing, dignity, and freedom at risk.

### Group Discussion and Reflection

1. In the Lord’s Prayer we pray “Give us this day our daily bread.” In his explanation of the Apostle’s Creed, Luther professed God always provided everything needed in life.<sup>47</sup> In *Key Largo* Scene 14: “More,” Rocco proudly agrees with McCloud’s assessment that what he wants is more, and he has never had enough. If God provides all we need, why do people steal? What has this to do with the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment?

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<sup>45</sup> *LC* 1, 7:225, in *BC*, 416.

<sup>46</sup> *Key Largo*, Keep case ed, DVD, Directed by John Houston (1948; Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2000). Run time: ~100 minutes. Rated: Approved.

<sup>47</sup> *SC* 2, 1:2, in *BC*, 354.

2. What are ways people try to take what does not belong to them – from people, from corporations, from nations? Where does their sense of entitlement come from? How can entitlement for one, hurt another? What basis should be used to determine who gets what?
3. What are examples of people feeling entitled to take what was not allocated to them, and twisting or ignoring laws to justify their actions? Who decides who is covered by the law? Who *should* decide? How does living in a democracy affect this issue? Why?
4. Existence and lack of courage is a reoccurring theme in this movie. Compare and contrast the courage and cowardice portrayed. What gave each character their courage and cowardice at different times and whom were they protecting? How do we find courage to stand up against theft and abuse, on or off the job?
5. For some, how does the threat of God's punishment deter crime? How is it a balm? Does God punish crime, or does crime contain a natural outcome?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. What are the ways that you manage to steal from others – both overtly and by ignoring theft by others? Why do you do so? What would happen if you stood up for right not wrong? What provides for your needs of daily bread and life?
2. How do people steal from you? What do they steal? How do you feel when they steal, and what do you do about it? Who stands up for you? Whom do you need to stand up for you, to look after your interests?

3. This week, notice and note down the ways you realized you and/or others took what didn't belong to you without asking or paying. This could be from actual observation or through news articles. In each instance, what could you glean was their rationale? What did you do? What could you have done? Why didn't you?
4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on ownership and desire, on how goods are obtained – both legally and illegally, and how envy fuels choices.

### **Lesson Nine: Do Unto Others Only Good**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not Bear False Witness against Your Neighbor

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.”

“There is nothing around or in us that can do greater good or greater harm in temporal or spiritual matters than the tongue, although it is the smallest and weakest member.”<sup>48</sup> Luther taught that a person's honor and good reputation was their “indispensable” treasure, which God wanted protected along with money and possessions.<sup>49</sup> Humans, on the other hand, preferred taking gossip and “[spreading] it into every corner, relishing and delighting in the chance to stir up someone else's dirt like

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<sup>48</sup>LC 1, 8:291, in *BC*, 425.

<sup>49</sup>LC 1, 8:255, in *BC*, 420.

pigs that roll in manure and root around in it with their snouts.”<sup>50</sup> This, said Luther, was “usurping God’s judgment and office.”

Luther saw three aspects of this commandment: First, people were to help others retain their legal rights. Judges were to be just, juries fair, “not perverting or concealing or suppressing anything on account of someone’s money, property, honor or power.”<sup>51</sup> Second, it related to “spiritual jurisdiction,” wherein the world degraded Christians and God’s Word, which Luther said to “let pass” per the third aspect. The third aspect related to the most pervasive human habit: judging people publicly outside of the legal process. “...[No one] has the right to judge and reprove a neighbor publicly, even after having seen a sin committed, unless authorized to judge and reprove. There is a very great difference between judging sin and having knowledge of sin. You may certainly know about a sin, but you should not judge it.”<sup>52</sup> Luther warned that improvable claims were false witnesses; to guard against them, accusations should only be made in public in front of a judge, so that they can be proven true publicly, and done only after one spoke privately with the person to help them improve. Once again, we were to help our neighbor in all his or her needs. “...[We] should use our tongue to speak only the best about all people, to cover the sins and infirmities of our neighbors, to justify their actions, and to cloak and veil them with our own honor. Our chief reason for doing this is the one

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<sup>50</sup>*LC 1, 8:267, in BC, 422.*

<sup>51</sup>*LC 1, 8:259-261, in BC, 421-422.*

<sup>52</sup>*LC 1, 8:266, in BC, 421.*

that Christ has given in the gospel...“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you. [Matthew 7:12]”<sup>53</sup>

Film: *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005)<sup>54</sup>

How do we defend our reputations against those we elect to protect us? *Good Night, and Good Luck* chronicles Edward R. Murrow’s successful journalistic attack on Senator McCarthy of Wisconsin in 1954, helping to stop McCarthy’s destruction of public and private lives through the paranoia of communism.

### Group Discussion and Reflection

1. How are reputations, possessions? How can you explain them as a “treasure” equal to money and property?
2. How does Luther explanation expand “gossip”? How can spreading the truth about people’s actions be destructive? What does it take to recover a damage reputation? Does this commandment call us to guard our own reputations? Why?
3. McCarthy’s actions were correlated to a witch-hunt. How did the Salem witch-hunts and McCarthy’s communist-hunt parallel? What modern day witch-hunts go on today? How are lives affected and/or destroyed? What are we called to do?

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<sup>53</sup> LC 1, 8:285-286, in BC, 424.

<sup>54</sup> *Good Night, and Good Luck*, widescreen ed, DVD, Directed by George Clooney, (2005; Santa Monica, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006). Run time: ~93 minutes. Rated: PG.

4. Both McCarthy and the witch trials involved entire societies: one local and one national. For both, there was one initial incident, but the expansion into a “hunt” required the agreement and participation of others. Why do you think each society became consumed with their situation? What lessons can we learn for today?

### **Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

1. How do you make sure your reputation remains good? When do you place guarding your own reputation before others’ needs? When has your reputation been threatened? How did this make you feel, and what did you do about it?
2. How have you threatened (or destroyed) someone’s reputation in the past? What was the circumstance and what were your actions? What would you like to change if you could? What would you say to the person today? Would you now?
3. This week, notice and note down the ways people guard or destroy the reputation of others, either in large ways or in subtle ways. What was at stake? What actions were taken? What did you do? What could you have done?
4. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on your self-esteem and reputation. How are they linked, who defines them for you, who or what protects them for you, and how God is involved.

### **Lesson Ten: Thought, Word & Deed**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not Covet Your Neighbor’s House

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.”

The 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Do Not To Covet Your Neighbor’s [Spouse, Servants], Cattle, or Whatever [Belongs To Your Neighbor]

*What is this? Answer:* “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.”

In his Large Catechism, Luther combines the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments about coveting – craving something another has – into one explanation. Luther understood the human condition of sin: “Such is nature that no one wants someone else to have as much as he or she does. Everyone tries to accumulate as much as he or she can, and lets others look out for themselves.”<sup>55</sup> Along with prohibiting the theft of *things*, God also placed boundaries against taking real estate and enticing people away from the neighbor, even if legal in the eyes of the law. Luther watched his society act the same as today’s: people using “clever tricks and shrewd tactics” to accumulate more; juries “twisting the law” to suit their own purposes, “straining words and using them for pretexts, without regard for equity or for our neighbor’s plight.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, Luther saw this law was not directed at

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<sup>55</sup> *LC* 1, 9:298, in *BC*, 425.

<sup>56</sup> *LC* 1, 9:299, in *BC*, 426.

people the world deemed wicked, but at those honored as upright who were convinced they upheld the law perfectly.<sup>57</sup> “God does not want you to deprive your neighbors of anything that is theirs, so that they suffer loss while you satisfy your greed, even though before the world you can retain the property with honor...It might not be called stealing or cheating, but it is coveting – that is, having designs on your neighbor’s property, luring it away from them against their will, and begrudging what God gave them.”<sup>58</sup>

Coveting is at the root of the damage we do to others: all other forms of harm stem from our greed for what others have, and the insistence that our needs and wants come first. “Above all, [God] wants the heart to be pure, even though, as long as we live here, we cannot accomplish that. So this commandment remains, like the rest, one that constantly accuses us and shows just how upright we really are in God’s sight.”<sup>59</sup>

Film: *All About Eve* (1950)<sup>60</sup>

What more needs to be said? Every form of coveting, greed, giving one their due, suffering consequences, being victimized by others, and having others expose your true self, is explored in this quintessential, Bette Davis film. “Fasten your seatbelts; it’s going to be a bumpy night!”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> LC 1, 9:2300, in *BC*, 426.

<sup>58</sup> LC 1, 9:307-308, in *BC*, 427.

<sup>59</sup> LC 1, 9:310, in *BC*, 427.

<sup>60</sup> *All About Eve*, DVD, Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1950; Beverly Hills, CA: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002). 138 minutes. Rated: Not Rated.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Scene 11 “Bill’s Welcome Home Birthday Party.”



**Group Discussion and Reflection**

1. In this movie, each character has their moment (or moments) wherein they push, or demand, that their view of the situation prevail. At other times, they become the victims of another's schemes. Discuss how each character was both predator and prey. What was at the core of their decisions, and what happened to all?
2. What are ways we legally covet and obtain what belongs to others? How do you feel when you find laws contradicting your sense of equality?
3. Do you feel you uphold the law and are righteous? How do you feel that Luther, then, says this commandment was given especially for you? Why do you think Luther said this?

**Self Reflections for the Upcoming Week**

5. What do you covet, what do you desire that belongs to someone else? How does this desire shape your thoughts, actions, and direction of life?
6. This week, notice and note down the ways you and people around you put into action the results of coveting, of finding ways to get what others have.
7. Reflective Activity: create a personal reflection on your coveting. What you covet, why you covet, and how this relates to who your god is.

### **Lesson Eleven: Help??!!**

In John 14:9 Jesus says, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” In Jesus, we see the God of the Old Testament in flesh and blood. We see God who passionately loves each one of us and is deeply wounded and impacted by our daily betrayal, wounded even to death. We see God who calls us back to trust God only, not ourselves, as provider and sustainer of life, to recognize the injustices in this world are the result from our self-trust, and that our thoughts and actions bring about destruction and their own punishment.

As a final lesson, reflect on Luther’s explanations to each of the commandments, the films chosen, and the reflection activities.

1. How did they speak to our bondage to sin: how we can only create gods in our own image, place ourselves first, and by this shift in trust damage our relationship with God and with others?
2. How did they help you explore your relationship to God and to others? How did they not? Share with each other what other media choice(s), questions and/or activities would have worked better to help you explore this topic, and why.
3. If you could, how would you change the commandments? What would you add and what would you take away?
4. Finally, if this is who we are, are we consigned to this mess? If not, what rescues us from ourselves?

## APPENDIX A

### Suggested Guidelines when Implementing the Curriculum

The curriculum is designed for group use. While self study and film viewing is an option, participation in a group discussion encourages you to work with other points of view that can challenge your own. Since the lessons deal with life issues, they may strike personal chords that increase this challenge; therefore, certain group dynamic guidelines are presented, designed to ensure a safe environment:

- 👉 **Materials needed:** A meeting space with AV equipment, comfortable seating and restrooms. Per person: one lesson packet, one blank notebook for jotting notes during the movies and discussions, and for recording reflections during the week, plus something to write with.
- 👉 **Environment:** Plan for the first and last lesson to last two hours for reading and discussion, and lessons two through ten to take three and a half hours to include watching the film. (See Appendix B for potential timetables.) Choose a space and the appropriate audio-visual equipment to allow for comfort and ease of viewing by all. Please note: the film content and potential discussion are not appropriate for children. It is suggested that the class location be different from where your children are being watched to allow for open and uninterrupted discussion.
- 👉 **History:** It is anticipated that some or all in your group will have had little or no exposure to the commandments, or to Luther. It is hoped that those with more will share their knowledge as needed and requested, and with courtesy and joy.

- 👉 **Discussion:** People's values and opinions have been shaped by the unique aspects of their life to date, and each person is equally worthy before God; therefore discussions should be respectful and affirm each person's right, and the time they need, to uncover their current thoughts and to consider new ones. A facilitator should be chosen to keep the discussion on track, and ensure the discussion is evenly distributed between the participants, but is not expected to "teach." Each week's questions are open ended, with no right or wrong answer, and no answers are given. Depending on the size of group present, the questions can be discussed first in groups of 2-4, and then as a whole group. This enables greater participation for those uncomfortable talking and processing within large groups.
- 👉 **Reflection:** A key element to any curriculum is allowing reflection and integration of lessons learned into one's life. During the discussion and film, it is suggested you keep a notebook going of key words and thoughts for future reflection and discussion. The notebook can also be used for the self-reflection activities for the following week, presented at the end of each lesson. These activities enable you individually, or with friends, to explore the life implications of the commandment. Time may be allotted each week at the beginning of the lesson to allow group reflection of discoveries from the prior session.
- 👉 **Accountability to the group:** Study groups require participation and commitment. It is suggested that these Group Guidelines be discussed at the outset and modifications be agreed to by the participants, and an appropriate commitment to the group should be formulated and agreed on in the first meeting.

## APPENDIX B

### Potential Timetable for the Lesson Activities

Lesson	Lesson	Minutes					Hours
		Prior	Read	Watch	Discuss	Total	Total
1	All Law Comes From God	-	45	-	75	120	2.0
2	We All Have A God	15	10	112	50	187	3.1
3	God's Name Is Powerful	15	10	125	50	200	3.3
4	God's Word Creates Life & Faith	15	10	97	50	172	2.9
5	God Keeps Us Safe Through Authority	15	10	139	50	214	3.6
6	Protect All Life – <i>Especially</i> Your Enemy's	15	10	118	50	193	3.2
7	Spouse and Families: Optional or Necessary?	15	10	102	50	177	3.0
8	Stop! Thief!	15	10	100	50	175	2.9
9	Do Unto Others Only Good	15	10	93	50	168	2.8
10	Thought, Word, & Deed	15	10	138	50	213	3.6
11	Help??!	30	45	-	45	120	2.0

#### Lesson Activities:

- 👉 **Prior:** If desired, take a few minutes reviewing insights gleaned from self-reflective activities.
- 👉 **Read:** Take time to read reflection and questions before watching the movie
- 👉 **Watch:** Watch the film. The time listed is the film run time; it does not take into consideration starting and stopping the film. If the films are watched outside of the class time, this time allotment is not applicable. While this option would reduce the class time, the dynamics of watching the same film together, and discussing while emotions and reactions are their freshest, would be lost. The balance between time commitment and depth of discussion should consider the needs and preference of the group.
- 👉 **Discuss:** Engage the group discussion questions. This time allotment is flexible, based on the group dynamics.

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